THE CASE OF JOHN BULL

EGYPT

THE TRANSVAAL

VENEZUELA

G. MONTBARD

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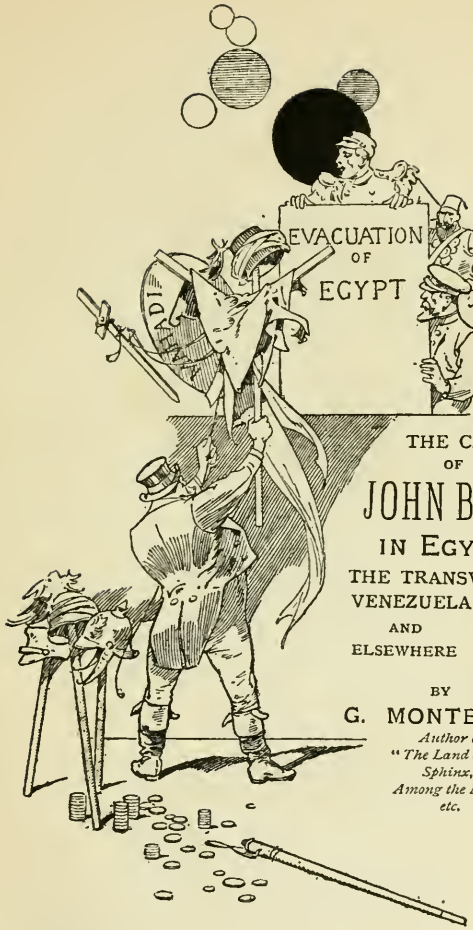
JOHN BULL'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.



THE CASE OF JOHN BULL IN EGYPT

THE TRANSVAAL VENEZUELA AND ELSEWHERE

BY

G. MONTBARD

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TO THE READER

THIS is merely a desultory conversation between my old friend John Bull and your humble servant, his guest in London for some five-and-twenty years.

It is the fantasy of an artist plunging for once into the politics of the hour, and finding pleasure in giving full scope to the conjectures and reflections suggested to him by the sudden imbroglio of events and the present disconcerting development of circumstances.

I have merrily heckled my amiable host, of set purpose and in all friendship, and I know Johnny has too much sense to turn nasty at Froggy's onslaughts, and too much *finesse* not to read between the lines the good fellowship I feel for him, and my undisguised desire to see this cordial understanding, which is on every lip and, I trust, in every heart, shortly become an accomplished fact.

In questions of this kind, so pregnant with possible quarrels, this would be the solution which would cause the greatest

satisfaction in both camps, and would indubitably have the most useful results.

But for mercy's sake let Johnny finish once and for all with this ridiculous farce, prolonged beyond measure, of the Mahdi, who darts up like a Jack-in-the-box at the first word about evacuation, to hide himself under the lid again as soon as attention is diverted from the subject.

The pleasantry is monotonous and in very bad taste, and singularly compromises the good intercourse between the two countries.

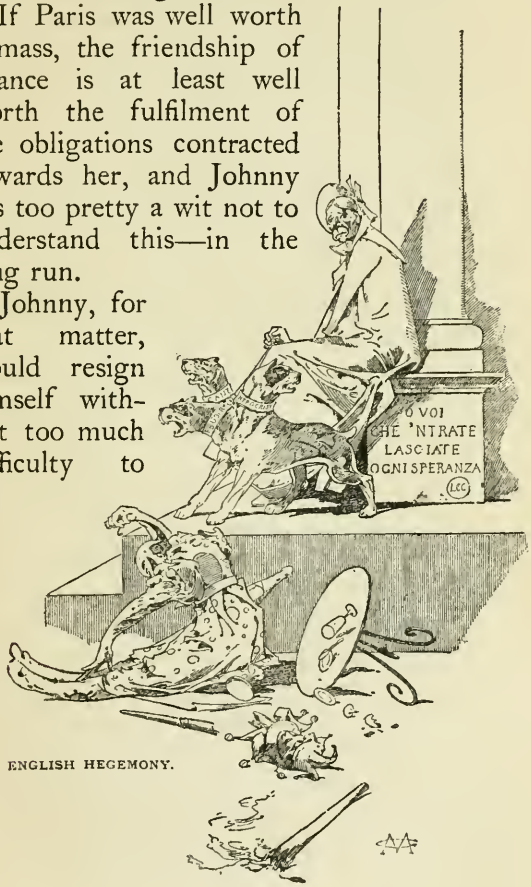
Either this horrible negro is really a danger—and in that case let Johnny, as the authorised gendarme of Egypt, go to Khartoum, shut him up or shoot him and his satellites, and leave an Egyptian garrison there to prevent such a thing being repeated; or, he is a sham, an articulated bogy, a sort of mechanical doll with a black face, whom Johnny dexterously causes to work according to the exigencies of his policy. If so a term should be speedily put to this deplorable humbug, which has already lasted too long.

After that let Master Johnny take leave of the Khedive, allow Egypt to

be mistress of her own destiny, re-enter his legal domicile, and come to receive our sincere congratulations.

If Paris was well worth a mass, the friendship of France is at least well worth the fulfilment of the obligations contracted towards her, and Johnny has too pretty a wit not to understand this—in the long run.

Johnny, for that matter, would resign himself without too much difficulty to



ENGLISH HEGEMONY.

the evacuation. Very positive and very clear-sighted in his interests, he knows how to give way at the right time for his own benefit, and is not the man to let go his hold on anything without amply compensating himself in one way or another.

Instead of embarking at Alexandria, Master Johnny might very well, as seems to be his idea, after having shot or made a prisoner of the Mahdi, whose power is already on the wane, return by the south viâ Khartoum and touch hands with Captain Lugard, who at this moment is ascending northwards by the Bahr-el-Ghazel, leave the Khedive the Egyptian portion of the Soudan, and keep the largest and best—Kordofan, Sennaar, and Darfour ; that is to say, the whole Upper Nile—with Suakim for an outlet.

That would be a pretty good haul, a very reasonable compensation for his forced departure. From this admirable position, joined to his other possessions in South Africa, it would be easy for him to watch over events, concentrate his forces, and await a favourable opportunity again to place his hand on Egypt. He would thus forge the last link northward in the chain of his possessions and com-

plete the head of the gigantic English cross spread over the black region, severing all communication between the possessions of other European States.

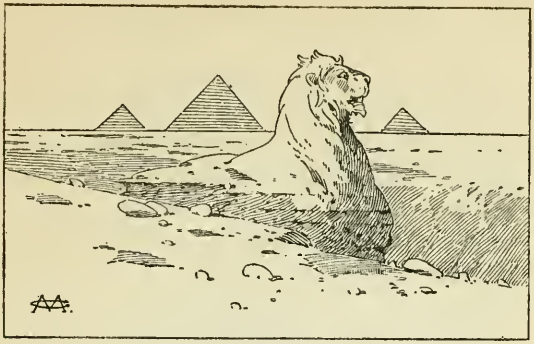
He would be very well able, merely in exchange for a certain leniency of manner towards his Teuton kinsmen, to induce the latter, with the assent of the two other members of the Triple Alliance, to give him a free hand in these regions, leaving him at liberty to appropriate the Soudan and . . . Egypt. For Johnny is a deft weaver of plots, and troubles himself very little about the nature of the means, provided he secures his end.

As to that famous system of spheres of influence, recently inaugurated, Johnny does not care a fig. His own sphere of influence is the entire universe. He bores his hole wherever he can, impelled by his formidable will, absolutely disdainful of the rights of others, deaf to universal recriminations, superbly indifferent to threats, and full of unwavering confidence in himself.

And in the rude grasp of these sea-dogs, by the continual and mighty efforts of this race of stubborn sailors, of matchless traders and daring specu-

lators, the wealth of nations pours into the minute island, while slowly, like an immense winding sheet, English hegemony, stiff and sad, expands and weighs upon a globe hypnotised by the *savoir faire* of these solemn and shrewd rigorists.

GEORGES MONTBARD.



THE SPHINX, AS IT IS NOW.

The Case of John Bull

in Egypt, the Transvaal, Venezuela, and elsewhere

At Cairo. On Shepheard's balcony. FRANCE *and* JOHN BULL *are seated at a table, talking. They have just been served with a glass of sherry and a whisky.*

FRANCE. So, my dear fellow, you are quite decided; you remain?

JOHN BULL (*very positively*). Yes! I am here. I shall remain here.

FRANCE. *Beatus possidens!* "What you possess you will keep," as your Stormont sings at the "Tivoli."

JOHN BULL. And he sings true for me, if false for you! I—will—re—main!

FRANCE. Just like MacMahon—*j'y suis j'y reste;* which did not prevent the descendant of that Hiberno-Norman emigrant clearing out : and you will do the same.

JOHN BULL. That is to say, if I choose.

FRANCE. If *they* choose.

JOHN BULL. And who then, pray, would force us to do so?

FRANCE. Europe.

JOHN BULL (*defiantly*). And by what right, if you please, my beauty?

FRANCE (*gravely*). By the right that every contracting party to an agreement possesses of opposing any infraction, by one or several of their number, of the conditions agreed to by common consent.

JOHN BULL. But Europe, with the exception of yourself, and—even then——

FRANCE. That "even then" is at least—premature.

JOHN BULL. Well?

FRANCE. Go on.

JOHN BULL (*continuing*). Europe has nothing, or very little, to do with our occupation of Egypt.

FRANCE. I beg your pardon. Europe has everything to do; her rights are very clearly defined and sanctioned by

treaties. These rights repose: firstly, on the capitulations; secondly, on the judiciary reform which in 1875 established an international jurisdiction to take cognisance of suits between Europeans of different nationalities and between Europeans and natives; thirdly, on the financial conventions between Egypt and the Powers, settling the position of the European creditors in regard to Egypt, and imposing certain rules in the administration of the country. It follows from this that the Egyptian government ought only to be ruled by the Khedive's decrees, subordinate to the rights of Europe.

JOHN BULL. That was true before our occupation, but since then positions have changed.

FRANCE. Not at all. From the fact of your occupation England acquires no right, beyond those she possessed conjointly with France and the other Powers. All that is done beyond them is illegal.

JOHN BULL (*sarcastically*). Then you admit that we should have allowed our subjects to be massacred in Egypt, and have witnessed the butchery, standing at ease.

FRANCE. Not at all. Your intervention to establish order was strictly your right, and, above all, your duty.

JOHN BULL. And yours also, if I am not mistaken?

FRANCE. And mine.

JOHN BULL. And yet you didn't do it!

FRANCE (*seriously*). That was a serious fault on our part, I confess, and, what is worse, an egregious blunder; but it is a still graver wrong for you to have established yourself in the country, contrary to every notion of right, when once order was restored and Arabi exiled.

JOHN BULL (*in an insinuating manner*). Still, my beauty, we offered to let you come with us and chastise that scamp Arabi, and you turned a deaf ear. As at Fontenoy, you said to us: "*Messieurs les Anglais tirez les premiers.*" And, while we were firing, you quietly slipped off to Beirût to the strains of "*Partant pour la Syrie*," and in order to turn your powder and shot to some account, you afterwards went and bombarded Sfax.

FRANCE (*correcting*). Only the forts.

JOHN BULL. And we also the forts, at Alexandria, my dear. We even

reduced those forts, which, by the way, were built by your countrymen, to smithereens.

FRANCE (*disdainfully*). Yes! But they were defended by fellahs and "scratch" officers.

JOHN BULL (*jeeringly*). Trained to fight by a Frenchman. Larmée Pacha instructed them; just think!

FRANCE. Oh! those men were not present. There were only the creatures of Arabi; the others refused to form part of that puppet's band.

JOHN BULL. None the less, we saved Alexandria.

FRANCE. Ruined it, you mean; by an outrageous and random bombardment.

JOHN BULL. But it was necessary, my sweet girl.

FRANCE (*drily*). Once the forts were destroyed, you should have landed your sailors and put the insurgents to flight at the point of the bayonet. You might have sacrificed a few soldiers, but you would have saved the city.

JOHN BULL. It would have been blood spilt uselessly.

FRANCE. And you mean to say you hesitate about the loss of a few soldiers?

JOHN BULL. Hang it all! We have not a vast number, and the few we have cost us dear.

FRANCE. That, however, is what we did at Sfax, landing under the enemy's fire, carrying the dismantled ramparts by assault, and taking the town, house by house, instead of reducing it to a heap of ruins.

JOHN BULL (*jeeringly*). Ah! my dear friend, you are so impulsive and hot-headed, and you have, moreover such a lot of food for cannon.

FRANCE (*familiarly, pointing to the waistcoat of her vis-à-vis*). And you, my plump John Bull, have such a heavy corporation to carry and look after.

JOHN BULL (*good-humouredly*). I must say I am not an enemy of comfort.

FRANCE (*ironically*). Far from it: and it seems to you more rational, especially more convenient, to wait until a city is abandoned in order to take it, and to hasten the evacuation by destroying half of it.

JOHN BULL (*modestly*). Oh! only the bad quarters—hovels that merely required to come down to make room for magnificent edifices.

FRANCE (*glancing at him from the*

corner of her eye). Built with English capital and by architects of Great Britain. That is foresight. But the Mehemet Ali Square, where the buildings were not precisely hovels—that was slightly knocked about:

JOHN BULL. Oh! by mistake—a few shots badly aimed.

FRANCE (*smiling maliciously*). Confess they were intelligent bullets. It would have been a godsend to sack Alexandria to the advantage of Port Said, which you would have enlarged and rebuilt on a larger scale, and which would have become an essentially English town at the entrance to the Suez Canal. But the ammunition failed, and when one is short of that sort of cash, one spends it cautiously; and you know the value of money, my good fellow; you even make it out of time, to which you have given a cash value—"Time is money." For many, time is but something to be passed, more or less pleasantly: for you it is a security, which you negotiate. You don't even keep a second of that precious time for eating. When perched up on your stools in the city, you absorb, in the twinkling of an eye, a lunch that would suffice to make

up a Frenchman's bill of fare for a couple of days, or a Spaniard's for a week.

JOHN BULL (*nettled*). Madam, one does not live to eat, one eats to live.

FRANCE (*slyly*). Anyhow, not on Sundays after the absinthe of the service.

JOHN BULL (*shocked, interrupting her*). Absinthe!

FRANCE. The aperient if you prefer, for those two hours of meditation do make a void, and as bitters produce no other effect, you take an aperient whether you will or not—making a virtue of necessity, my good fellow. That's logic!

JOHN BULL (*very stiffly*). Logic is rather impertinent sometimes.

FRANCE. And the religious mania quite insufferable, always.

JOHN BULL (*with compunction*). You respect nothing, my angel.

FRANCE. Yes, indeed! I have respect for myself, and that's something.

JOHN BULL (*somewhat sheepishly*). Certainly, dear girl, and I congratulate you; but, for a woman, I find you rather —what shall I say?

FRANCE. Fast, as you call it at home.

JOHN BULL. Not quite that, but——

FRANCE (*completing his thought*). Almost!

JOHN BULL. I won't venture to contradict you, for I notice you have such a singularly decided tone, a turn of mind so aggressive and—I must say it—disrespectful towards everything that we revere, a freedom of language with a crudity of expression so far beyond all I have ever seen or heard, that—er—well, I confess it completely nonplusses me.

FRANCE. You find me rather—very different from what you knew me to be formerly. Eh?

JOHN BULL (*sadly*). Alas!

FRANCE (*dreamily*). There's not much left—what do you think?—of the graceful, refined, loving creature of the past? You must give her up for lost; the species is extinct, and the last specimen dead and buried. This new style, which has replaced her, scares you a bit, my worthy John Bull—the new woman, that hybrid animal in course of evolution, neither one sex nor the other, neither flesh nor fish, that sort of indeterminate creature between the two—something rather loathesome, in fact. The phantom of womanhood, not even a female, barely

a mammal, a sickly, peevish being with a rudimentary conscience, having only preserved the agreeable futilities of her sex without retaining its august utility, preferring the illusion of love to its reality, considering maternity a cumbersome superfluity and in bad taste, a thing that is a bore and vulgar ; masculine vice masquerading in petticoats, when it is not in " bloomers."

JOHN BULL (*bewildered*). How abominable! One can hardly believe in the existence of such a creature.

FRANCE (*with a slight shrug of the shoulders*). It is so, nevertheless. What can you expect, my dear friend ? One must be of one's epoch, and it is not our fault if the epoch is cracked, if there be insanity in the air, and if we all, men and women alike, solicited by an incessant and incurable cerebral pruritus, excite our jaded nerves to exasperation, and awaken, little by little, the madness which is always slumbering in a corner of our being. I am in the train my good friend, and your new woman, my colleague on the other side of the channel, is in the same carriage ; your seat is reserved, and every one, you may be sure, will get in. Where shall we go to? The devil

knows! No doubt to a colossal bankruptcy of the brain, to a complete smash-up, a general crash of the achievements laboriously accumulated by humanity for thousands of years.

JOHN BULL (*very excitedly*). Well, she's a nice lot, your new woman!

FRANCE. Pardon! She is yours.

JOHN BULL. The other, then, your own new woman—and mine. They have some funny things in reserve for us in the folds of their petticoats.

FRANCE. One must throw too many stones at her, after all. She couldn't be better made for her co-partner, the new man, who is no better than she is, and whose idiotic rage for pleasure at any cost has so much contributed to the hatching of this interesting phenomenon. In his erotic and criminal imbecility he has killed in the egg, or contaminated in the germ, the generations to come. It's Adam's vengeance for Eve's treason. To her rent in the contract, he now responds by tearing the agreement to pieces. He ends, as his companion of Eden began, by a fault, but a fault which saps his own life.

JOHN BULL (*quite downcast*). What a future!

FRANCE (*pitifully*). Poor soul! You look quite upset.

JOHN BULL. Can one gaze in cold blood on such a prospect of calamities?

FRANCE (*seeking to console him*). Bah! you will get used to it. And besides, nothing lasts for ever. When it is all over, there will still be fine days for humanity.

JOHN BULL. God grant it, my dear friend!

FRANCE. It's a moment, to pass like that of the service on Sundays, after which you take to your heels to regain your home more nimbly than you left it, and from a cucumber preserved in devotion, transform yourself, without taking time to breathe, into a digestive tube.

JOHN BULL (*amazed*). A tube?

FRANCE. Yes, a tube, with an opening at either end—neither more nor less.

JOHN BULL (*shocked and reddening to his ears*). How disgusting! It it only French people who find such definitions.

FRANCE. And only the English, if one excepts the Esquimaux, who prove their correctness.

JOHN BULL (*casting his eyes to*

heaven). What a way of speaking—and in the mouth of a woman, too!

FRANCE. *La femme nouvelle*—your new woman: you forget.

JOHN BULL. Then in your opinion I am only a kind of tube—nothing else?

FRANCE. You like myself, like the others, like every creature gifted with life. The tube varies in form, but it's a tube, a simple tube.

JOHN BULL. Why not a cannon whilst you are about it?

FRANCE. Your comparison is not wanting in originality, my friend. Man, in fact, is a cannon and is loaded in the same way, the old system that is to say—by the muzzle. How you cram it, too, that cannon, on Sundays and Bank Holidays, and particularly at Christmas? It makes one wonder how it is it doesn't burst. It must be of rare metal.

JOHN BULL (*complacently*). Of steel, my good woman; and—you know—English steel——

FRANCE. Of steel or what you will, but, ye gods! how you gorge it with mountains of meat, pastry, puddings moistened with extraordinary sauces, washed down with innumerable glasses of whisky. And in the intervals between

these pantagruelic banquets, don't you treat yourself to interminable naps, huddled up in your gigantic arm-chairs, laboriously assimilating the monstrous diet, in profound meditation !

JOHN BULL (*who has been smiling during the enumeration of all these good things*). That proves we have a sound digestion, little one.

FRANCE. A capacious stomach rather. You have already absorbed a good part of the world ; you are now engaged in swallowing Egypt, and the lump is hard to chew.

JOHN BULL (*laughing and displaying two superb rows of teeth*). Oh ! the teeth are good.

FRANCE (*seriously*). Yes, but the face is terribly conjested, my poor fellow, and apoplexy hardly ever pardons.

JOHN BULL (*rather anxiously*). Apoplexy ! — it's health, my child, an excess of health, on the contrary, that rounds off my cheeks and gives my countenance a ruddy hue.

FRANCE. Excesses in everything are dangerous, particularly in good things. Take the advice of a friend, whilst it is yet time ; let the lump go.

JOHN BULL (*slyly*). For another to

nab it. You have teeth nicely set, my pretty dear. Your little fangs are very pointed, and the bit might tempt you.

FRANCE (*with an air of disrelish*). What! Touch the leavings of others!

JOHN BULL (*smiling*). Oh! so little bitten into, and so appetising!

FRANCE. Besides, I haven't an appetite so voracious as yours.

JOHN BULL (*who seems to doubt it*). Hum! I don't know so much. In a few years Tunis—the Congo, Timbuctoo, Tonking, Madagascar. The knife and fork have been pretty busy there! It remains to be seen how you will digest this hotch-potch. Your appetite, you see, is quite as voracious as mine, but I'm very much afraid your delicate stomach will require to make a good many efforts before assimilating all this heavy food. If, as you contend, somewhat gratuitously to my mind, I have a tendency to apoplexy, you will not be cross, my charming child, if I point out in you a little anæmia and a touch of gastralgia. Listen to my advice, in your turn: follow a more judicious diet, select tender viands of easy digestion, restoring your strength instead of exhausting it. You have an ugly customer on your

eastern frontier, who only seeks wounds and bumps—a booby who is clumsily trying to pick a quarrel with us just now, a ruffian with dubious intentions, who has already once sadly ill-treated you and is anxious to do it again. Make new blood, my beauty, so as to give this vulgar fellow a good dressing. That would be better for you than using your teeth on tough quarters too heavy for your dainty palate.

FRANCE (*laughing*). And, it goes without saying, just suitable for yours.

JOHN BULL (*affecting modesty*). Faith! I confess I should only make a mouthful of them even at the risk of provoking the attack you hinted at. Nothing venture, nothing have, my pet. *Audaces fortuna juvat*; and I have the audacity.

FRANCE. Ah! That! Yes! You might even say cheek, and plenty of it.

JOHN BULL (*running his fingers through his thick head of hair*). You flatter me.

FRANCE. Oh, not at all. I merely state the fact.

JOHN BULL. In what, then, have I had so much—cheek, as you so elegantly put it, my dear girl?

FRANCE. In what? Why in every-

thing, always and everywhere, my noble sir. I will not go back to the Greek calends, nor will I reproach you with your misdeeds of other days—Newfoundland, Canada, Florida, Louisana, Mauritius, etc., so dexterously grabbed; or India, that jewel filibustered from that poor Dupleix.

JOHN BULL (*interrupting her*). We have erected a statue to him, Madam.

FRANCE. It would have been better to have given us back India and not to have erected him a statue. But all that is ancient history. Let us speak of the present. You grab half Africa without crying "Look out!" and screech like a peacock when we go to Timbuctoo. One fine morning, Burmah awakens as an English colony, and when we obtain a strip by treaty——

JOHN BULL (*interrupting her*). Supported by your cannon.

FRANCE. Cannon-shots are the punctuation of treaties, my dear friend. When we obtain, then, a thin slice of territory along the Mekong, you fall into a swoon and shout "Murder!" It displeases you to have me as a neighbour, and you endeavour to establish a ridiculous buffer state between my possessions

and yours, for fear of being in close contact with me, which is very ungallant on your part, and would seem to imply I am wanting in good breeding.

JOHN BULL (*protesting*). Far from me such a supposition! On the contrary, I am afraid!

FRANCE (*taking no trouble to conceal her astonishment*). Afraid? You?

JOHN BULL (*pursing up his mouth, and making sheep's eyes*). Yes, my charming neighbour, for fear of your irresistible seductiveness. You are so graceful, you exercise so great a charm on all that surrounds you, that one cannot take too many precautions to avoid your fascinating influence.

FRANCE. What! you would be afraid of me—you, my good John Bull?

JOHN BULL (*extremely gallant*). Afraid of myself, Madam. Near you, one could not help loving you.

FRANCE (*laughing*). As the wolf loves the lamb; as you love Egypt;—to devour it.

JOHN BULL (*more and more gallant, continuing the phrase*). ——with kisses.

FRANCE. She pays pretty dearly for them, poor Egypt, and gives you a bountiful return, my artful colleague.

JOHN BULL (*feigning astonishment*). Pays me? Why, I'm ruining myself keeping her, that hussy of an Egypt, and the more I do for her the less she thanks me.

FRANCE. That must be because you set about the job badly, or because she'll have nothing to do with you. One cannot buy affection by the pound, my friend.

JOHN BULL. But it's something frightful what she costs me, the slut, and I can get nothing from her.

FRANCE (*slyly*). Then leave her; she'll no doubt be grateful to you.

JOHN BULL (*pulling a wry face*). And the millions I've spent on her in all kinds of ways?

FRANCE. Cross it out.

JOHN BULL. And my pride?

FRANCE. Sacrifice it.

JOHN BULL (*in a biting tone*). You make very light of the matter—you, who are so touchy and of such a cavilling susceptibility that one never knows what whim has got into your head, nor when and how one has offended you.

FRANCE. It's an affair of tact, my friend, and no one can say you've a very large dose of that.

JOHN BULL (*nettled*). Not at atom. I never use it. It's delicate to handle, troublesome to use, and, besides, I like to have my elbows free.

FRANCE (*rallying him*). Here especially, and even my presence would hardly please you.

JOHN BULL (*mealy-mouthed*). To tell me that, after I so courteously asked you to accompany me, and, on your inexplicable refusal, promised you to leave Egypt, when once order was re-established! Was not that good fellowship?

FRANCE. Yes. No doubt. It would have been had you shown good faith; but you know better than I do, my good man, that the promise to leave Egypt was much less a burst of generous impulse than a calculation well worked out, a stratagem to reassure Europe, a soothing draught for my susceptibilities, a promise which you never for a single moment intended to perform.

JOHN BULL (*somewhat out of countenance*). You misjudge me, my charmer.

FRANCE (*drily*). I'm not judging you at all. I am simply explaining to you what you are quite as well aware of

as I am myself—namely, that if your intervention in 1883 was a right, your prolonged stay has become a violation of that right. You had, I agree, in presence of the interests of your countrymen which were threatened, the right to intervene and protect them, particularly in face of our inconceivable refusal to do so; but, my good friend, you so thoroughly felt that these measures could only be of a provisional character, and that, if they had in any way assumed the appearance of a protectorate, Europe would not have sanctioned them, that you hastened to affirm openly that you had no intention of attempting to infringe the rights of Egypt and Turkey. On the tenth of August, 1882, Gladstone stated in Parliament that the aim of England was not to occupy Egypt indefinitely. "If there be one thing we shall not do," he said textually, "it is that." But if there be one thing you are doing, it is—that.

JOHN BULL (*raising his eyes to heaven*). Thus to doubt the honesty of my intentions!

FRANCE (*disdainfully*). Leave your honesty for a moment, and let us pass on

to facts. As was said just now, you undertook to Europe to evacuate Egypt as soon as order was re-established there.

JOHN BULL. Exactly; and order is far from being re-established there. The proof is that recently again, in the Soudan——

FRANCE (*interrupting him*). Yes, I know—the Mahdi, who is up to his tricks, Kitchener, who sends his steamers, full of Soudanese troops, up to Wady-Halfa, leaves four men and a corporal there, and returns on one of Cook's boats to take his coffee at Cairo, whilst his negro fleet is borne down gently by the current to Philæ.

Each time one speaks to you of evacuation, the Mahdi has a nervous attack and this little comedy is performed, this coming and going of boats on the Nile, as speedily terminated as unexpectedly begun, commencing with the first word about evacuation, ending as soon as the question is shelved.

Your little dodges are known, great humbug; they no longer deceive.

JOHN BULL (*testily*). In any case *we* (*laying stress on the word*)—we do not consider order re-established and——

FRANCE (*slightly shrugging her shoulders, and interrupting him*). You will never acknowledge it, for the day you do you will have to decamp and tear yourself from the delights of this African Capua and—one is so well off here, eh, my portly squire?

JOHN BULL. We shall keep our word, but we make the reservation of choosing the propitious moment for leaving.

FRANCE (*incredulously*). You will no more leave of your own accord than you did in 1888, the time you fixed as the extreme date of your evacuation.

JOHN BULL. A conditional evacuation.

FRANCE. Oh! most conditional; and it is thanks to that clause, making the evacuation subordinate to the restoration of order, an ingeniously elastic stipulation which with a little cleverness permitted you to evade your word and make your promise illusory, that you have been able to consider your obligation to evacuate a dead letter, and to look upon Egypt as an annex of Great Britain. It was your sheet-anchor, this restrictive arrangement, of no consequence if your intention had been to conform to

the spirit of your declaration, but of paramount importance if, as facts seem to show, you mean to abide by the letter. And a sailor of your stamp knows how to cast his anchor as he should, where he should, and when he should.

JOHN BULL. But Lord Granville only undertook——

FRANCE (*abruptly interrupting him*). Lord Granville, on the sixteenth of June, 1885, undertook "to recall the British troops at the commencement of the year 1888, on condition the Powers were then of opinion that the evacuation could be performed without endangering peace and order in Egypt."

Every one considered that it could be done except our friend John Bull.

JOHN BULL. But order——

FRANCE (*interrupting him*). Always the old programme: the Mahdi, Kitchener, the little boats on the water—the same old game. It's a little out of date now, but it took then. This practical joke of restoring order was played at the right time, and will be performed indefinitely according to the necessities of the case and the exigencies of your policy. It's the *deus ex-machina*, that Jack-in-the-box with black face and fuzzy head

of hair, intervening always at the psychological moment and quickly re-entering his box as soon as the curtain falls. Ah ! the machine works well, and there's no mistake on that score.

Your only plausible reason for remaining in Egpyt is that of having to defend it against the problematical attacks of the Mahdi, and you will take very good care not to lose such a pretext by getting rid of this dummy.

JOHN BULL. You seem to think, my dear friend, that it's child's play to deal with these fanatics.

FRANCE (*ironically*). This nuisance would have been sent *ad patres*, or to join Arabi, ages ago had he not been so useful to you. This sword of Damocles always suspended over Egypt is the safeguard of your occupation. You entrench yourself behind this constant menace of the dislocation of the country to elude your promises and eternalise your sojourn on the banks of the Nile.

JOHN BULL. It's a state of things imposed on us.

FRANCE. That you keep up, you mean to say.

JOHN BULL. That we keep up?

FRANCE. Yes! And with the greatest care. No more Mahdi, no more danger for Egypt! Order reigning from Alexandria to Khartoum, your part of protector is at an end, and as a result comes the obligation to meet your engagements and evacuate the territory. So you are very careful not to molest this interesting personage, this inestimable auxiliary *in partibus infidelium*. He remains, and will always remain, in the form of a black spectre, necessitating the presence of British battalions to ward it off. The Mahdi is only a pretext for staying—nothing more.

JOHN BULL. I repeat that the conquest of the Soudan presents almost insurmountable difficulties. Such an expedition would entail an enormous sacrifice of men and money, and even then the result would be very doubtful.

FRANCE. Nonsense! Would the soldiers of Great Britain be incapable of performing what the fellaheen under Mehemet Ali did? Such an idea is childish, and if one were to put faith in your words, one would have a wretched idea of English troops. The Mahdi's presence at Khartoum signifies chronic disorder, maintained by you, and the

occupation indefinitely prolonged. It's a trump in your hand, that's all.

If you really wish to re-establish order, you must extirpate the cause of the disorder—that is to say, the Mahdi. *Sublata causa*——

JOHN BULL (*continuing the quotation*). ——*tollitur effectus*.

FRANCE. Absolutely! Therefore, without further delay, you must go and lay hands on this prophet of the devil, occupy Khartoum, destroy this nest of bandits, as you should have done long ago, present your respects to the Khedive, hand him the keys of his possessions, and come and shake hands with us.

JOHN BULL. We are on our way to that. Kitchener is ascending the Nile with ten thousand men to take the measure of the dervishes.

FRANCE. That is simply a diversion to save the stake of the Italians at Kassala, a sop to the Triple Alliance, an advance in that direction in case the movement in ours should fail. But it is in no way a blow dealt at the Mahdi.

Dongola is not Khartoum. The dervishes don't care a fig whether you take your tea there or at Cairo. You will exterminate a few dozen of them

along the road if they put in an appearance, but you will be very careful not to push on as far as Khartoum and stir up that poor Mahdi whose existence is so incontestably precious to you.

As a counter blast, this bellicose fantasy in the form of a little military promenade in short marches interminably spaced out, at the expense of Egypt, without any appreciable benefit for her, will awaken Mussulman fanaticism in our African colonies and cause us trouble of all sorts on the Congo and elsewhere.

JOHN BULL. My dear friend, it is solely the difficulties of the enterprise that prevent us seizing Khartoum. That I affirm. Look at Baratieri, who wanted to bring Menelik back, stuffed, if they only gave him ten thousand men; they entrusted thirty thousand to him, and he got himself crushed at Adowa. They are terrible, those blacks, I tell you.

FRANCE. Then if you withdraw from the task, if you hesitate or are unable to fulfil your mandate, let another take it in hand.

JOHN BULL. Another—who would be you.

FRANCE. . . I or some one else: that

is not the question. You guarantee order in Egypt to Europe. Order there is subordinated to the disappearance of the Mahdi and his hordes, therefore you ought to shoot or drive away this untoward individual and his following. If you will not do so, you fail in your mandate ; if you cannot do so, you show the extent of your weakness. In both cases you only have the alternative of evacuating the country, leaving Europe to appoint some one more fitted to perform the task, to replace you.

Ah ! how briskly you would put an end to the tricks of that bugbear of Khartoum if to-morrow you were certain of the definitive possession of Egypt ! How those famous difficulties you put forward anent this expedition against the dervishes would all at once fade away, and how, in a trice, the land of the Pharaohs and the Soudan would be connected with your East Africa !

John Bull. Dongola is the first stage of the march on Khartoum.

France. If ever you go to the Soudan, particularly whilst paying the expenses of the journey with the funds of your *protégé*, it will be to keep it for yourself, and because you will feel that Egypt is

slipping from you, and that you can no longer avoid the obligation of fulfilling your promise. The position you will take up at Khartoum will be a strategic one, commanding the Egyptian valley, ready on the first propitious occasion to once more seize that Eden, abandoned so much against your will. It will be you who will then perform the part of the Mahdi and that time seriously.

JOHN BULL. What a Machiavelian policy you are attributing to me now, my good friend!

FRANCE. But Chamberlain gives a very fair insight into your policy: "Where we shall go," he affirms very distinctly, "there we shall remain. We have no idea of restoring to barbarism what we have conquered for civilisation." Civilisation of course means England. Why, Egypt is the apple of your eye, my good fellow! Its loss would make a disastrous gap in your African Empire, and you cling to the morsel with formidable obstinacy. You will not let go of this piece which you got by a stroke of luck, and which completes the game of patience you have been playing so cleverly for fifty years on the Black Continent, one of the most beautiful parts of which

—to wit, Madagascar—has, to your immense regret, escaped your clutches.

The evacuation! You have never given it a serious thought, my good friend, although you have allowed it to be believed that such was your ultimate intention. You procrastinate with ferocious tenacity, always putting off the date to the Greek calends. You drag the thing on despairingly, accumulating obstacles, and grasping at every pretext for delay, so as not to leave. Listening anxiously to the rumbling of the war-preparations of continental nations, you watch your chance, awaiting the moment of the terrible convulsion that will place in conflict colossal masses of men. At the first cannon-shot, you will quietly place your hand on the morsel you so ardently covet. Then, emptying your warehouses, you will encumber the markets of the Universe with your produce. You will sell your old stocks to combatants and spectators indifferently, will send Bibles to the wounded, your compliments to the conquerors, letters of condolence to the vanquished, and, in the boundless gratitude of your heart, you will for ever praise the Lord for his blessings.

JOHN BULL (*annoyed*). But if our presence here inconveniences you so much, why not have accepted at the beginning the Drummond Wolff convention by which we undertook to evacuate in three years.

FRANCE (*jeering bitterly*). On condition that you alone should go back in the event of internal troubles or external danger ; and then you would have returned with the sanction of the Powers—that is to say, legitimately, and not illegitimately, as this time. That meant placing your hand definitely on Egypt. The dodge was a bit too patent, and the attempt failed.

JOHN BULL. But really, are we not daily preparing for the possibility of an evacuation by re-organising everything ? Did we not in 1883 give Egypt an Assembly of Notables composed of natives assembling every two years, with a Legislative Council sitting in the interval.

FRANCE (*jeering*). A pretty joke, your Assembly of Notables, hatched in the brain of Lord Dufferin ; a few unfortunate beings, all very carefully picked out, who sit on condition of acting like mutes in the Seraglio, and who were nearly dissolved one day when in a

'GO NORTH, MY DEAR JOHNNY. LEAVE BY ALEXANDRIA, AND NOT *viâ* KHARTOUM: IT WOULD BE TOO HOT FOR YOU."

sudden fancy for independence they demanded the evacuation, very humbly for that matter, and with attenuating circumstances, at your earliest convenience. In a word, they are puppets, whose strings are held by Lord Cromer —persons who are supposed to do everything, and, in reality, do nothing.

By rights, the administration of Egypt devolves on the Egyptian Ministry, whose members are chosen by the Khedive: Home Affairs, Education Department, Public Works, Foreign Affairs, War Department, Justice, Finance.

JOHN BULL (*in a pet*). Well! Does not the Khedive still exercise power?

FRANCE. The Khedive reigns and Lord Cromer governs. The British Agent choses his Ministers—imposes them if need be. And at the slightest prank, at the least observation of this Sovereign in tutelage, on the bearing or value of his own troops, he is smartly recalled to his part of puppet-King-by-order.

JOHN BULL. He is so young!

FRANCE. And John Bull such an old fox, and so cunning!

JOHN BULL. Cunning? I don't much care for that qualification.

FRANCE. Smart, then.

JOHN BULL. I should prefer sharp —but no matter.

FRANCE. Well, sharp, if that's agreeable to you.

JOHN BULL. I like that better.

FRANCE (*continuing*). As to his ministers——

JOHN BULL (*interrupting her*). Well, they get along, at all events.

FRANCE. Yes, but very badly remunerated, and all saddled with fatly paid under-secretaries of State, who drive them at their own sweet will.

As to the few other native functionaries to be met with in the Administration, they are only for show, or occupy subordinate posts.

JOHN BULL. But you will not deny that from a financial, agricultural, industrial point of view, Egypt has made immense progress.

FRANCE (*disdainfully*). That is the natural development of the modifications and institutions introduced in both Egyptian and European interests, by the Control.

JOHN BULL (*vexed*). So we have done nothing ?

FRANCE. Yes, you have made re-

grettable and costly innovations, and even then to the exclusive advantage of the English.

JOHN BULL (*excitedly*). That's a scorcher, that is !

FRANCE. Very scorching, indeed. First of all, you have dismissed the French Financial Adviser and maintained Sir Elwin Palmer alone at the Ministry of Finance—a counsellor whose counsels are orders, and orders given solely for the benefit of your fellow-countrymen.

JOHN BULL. But was it not necessary to control the Egyptian finances ? I mean those not set apart for the payment of the debt.

FRANCE. The Public Debt Department, where one of the Commissioners is English, would willingly have undertaken that duty. It would have been more economical, but also more inconvenient—for you. And, as you said very truly, just now, my worthy John Bull, you like to have elbow-room.

JOHN BULL. And the army ?

FRANCE. Superb. And its officers excellent ; and moreover, men of the world, well-bred, and most charming company—but all English, and not a single superior native officer. The

Egyptian army deprived of its staff would be a body without a soul, and a danger.

JOHN BULL (*astonished*). A *danger*!

FRANCE. Absolutely! No leaders, no discipline; no discipline, no army; and consequently no barrier to oppose to the dervish hordes; nothing but a mob, ready to foment all sorts of internal disorders, and completely incapable of preventing the madmen of the Soudan rushing upon their quarry.

JOHN BULL. Perhaps you are right, but you will still grant me, pitiless critic, that Public Works, Agriculture, Commerce, are far from having suffered.

FRANCE. The little good done to Egypt comes from the impulse given by the European Control, and is by no means due to English initiative, except so far as concerns Public Works, the scheme to destroy Philæ by building a dyke at the entrance to the cataract, which is essentially an English idea.

A sum of £158,889 is granted to the Administration and only £13,783 to the Technical department. The difference is sufficiently significant. You can see they don't pare down the wages of the young clerks of respectable family, from London.

The ridiculous sum of £10,000 is alloted to the Department of Antiquities, and M. de Morgan receives a salary of £1000 which is what is given, and only to start with, to no matter what young fellow despatched from the banks of the Thames.

JOHN BULL (*somewhat annoyed*). But these young people, after all, are not so insignificant as you give them credit for being ; they possess a certain knowledge.

FRANCE (*acquiescing*). I have no doubt, but between the brain of one of these correct nobodies and that of M. de Morgan there is a margin, and between the amount of their salary and his there is none, which is monstrously iniquitous.

JOHN BULL. Yes, but one can't weigh people's brains in order to judge of their value.

FRANCE. No, but one should either have a sufficient amount of common-sense to take it into account or enough honesty to recognise it.

JOHN BULL. Then according to you we have done nothing?

FRANCE. A good deal, on the contrary ; but all you have undertaken has been done without any settled plan, and

without method, to the detriment of the Egyptians and at a fabulous cost. At home, besides, you do the same.

JOHN BULL (*very surprised*). In England?

FRANCE. In England. Look, here's an example. Take poultry, which can be reared as easily in your country as anywhere else.

JOHN BULL. Well?

FRANCE. Well! You don't succeed in disposing of it, or in struggling against the foreign market, because you don't know how to set about the job—for want of method, in a word.

JOHN BULL. That's one of your paradoxical fancies, my ingenious friend.

FRANCE. It's simply a fact set forth by the *Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper which doesn't sin on the side of humour, and in whose columns one rarely meets with paradoxical fancies, although one finds others there of an absolutely marvellous kind. This is what it advances, and I leave it all the responsibility of the statement:

"The Norman farmers contrive to rear enormous quantities of fowls, with great advantage to their own pockets, while their English colleagues, after at-

tempting the task, too often abandon it as hopeless."

JOHN BULL. The conditions are not the same.

FRANCE. "The conditions"—I am quoting textually—"under which each works are precisely similar, for there is little appreciable difference in the matter of climate. The one, however, manages to make the occupation a paying concern, while the other cannot always succeed in defraying the necessary expenses."

JOHN BULL. It's because our beautiful English pullets, so healthy and plump, have a good appetite, and are exacting in regard to their bill of fare, whereas your lanky fowls, with pinched stomachs and vulgar tastes, have the sobriety of camels, contenting themselves at lunch-time with wearing down their claws, scraping up the farm-yards and pilfering from the dung-hills infecting them a few scanty grains of barley or wheat and vegetable refuse.

FRANCE. You, no doubt, give yours *entrecôtes bearnaises* or *côtelettes soubises* washed down with *Chambertin* and *Clos-Vougeot*?

JOHN BULL. Not exactly; but they

thrive *better*, look *better*, and have a better appearance than yours. We treat them *better*.

FRANCE. Like gentlemen, eh! Yours have naturally their quarters of nobility, are aristocrats to the tips of their spurs, blue-blooded lords, with combs in place of ducal coronets, thoroughbreds who must be carved with deference, eaten with compunction, and digested in meditation, esteeming oneself very much honoured at serving as a funeral receptacle to such well-born poultry. As to ours, they are fools, riff-raff, ill-bred, feathered anæmic ruffians, having barely a few globules of blood in their veins, the carving of whom is a painful task, and the mastication still worse, whilst digesting them is an herculean labour ; and the swallowing of this horny and little-savoury flesh of low degree ought to be considered bad taste.

JOHN BULL. It's something like that, my dear.

FRANCE. Of course! Everything English is superior to what comes from the outside, and revered as much as the holy carpet of Cairo or the tomb of Mahomet.

JOHN BULL (*complacently*). And deserves to be.

FRANCE. Oh! in every respect. Articles of English manufacture outstrip, and by a long way, anything produced by other countries. That's agreed. So when you are guilty of an act of folly—and that happens oftener than it proportionately ought to—it is of noble dimensions, for you don't do things by halves. In fact, it surpasses all that the most daring imagination could devise. You are all dying of suppressed vanity, my good friend, even down to your most wretched starveling of Whitechapel, whose pride pierces through the holes in his rags, and who consoles himself for his misery with the thought that his noble lords are the richest in creation.

JOHN BULL. And you are dying of offended self-esteem, my beautiful girl, unless it be of hypertrophy of the heart: you have such a treasury of indulgence for others.

FRANCE. In the meanwhile, your farmers are bowled over by ours, because they do not know how to set about their work, any more than you do here at your Works; and I am of the opinion of the estimable newspaper which adds:

"Surely if more method were introduced into the rearing of poultry on our side of the water, the result should be equally satisfactory, and large sums of money would be retained in England which, under existing conditions, cross the Channel, never to return."

It breaks the heart of that worthy Anglo-Saxon pressman to see English guineas cross the Channel without a return ticket. It would be so nice to munch the fowl and slip its value into one's fob.

Not the slightest bit of method you see, my friend; and yet you have no dearth of Methodists in Great Britain, unless they have all taken refuge at Madagascar!

Well, in your Works here, there is the same want of cohesion in your plans, or, to call things by their right name, the same lack of method. Your system of irrigation in Upper Egypt is a failure which has engulfed millions. You wish to replace it by a system of reservoirs, another kind of experiment which must begin with submerging Philæ and some of the temples of Upper Egypt. And yet you do not even know whether the thing is possible and will give the results

you expect. It's pure *Erostratism*; only the method differs: he burned; you inundate.

JOHN BULL (*rather out of countenance*). I am willing to admit that our first system was a failure. We all make mistakes, my dear. Are you not the first to bitterly regret not having followed us along the banks of the Nile?

FRANCE. Exactly. But having once made a blunder, one becomes a little circumspect when the possibility occurs of committing another. So, basing ourselves on your own reiterated promises to quit Egypt, we do not let slip any opportunity of bringing about this evacuation, but stick to your skin like gad-flies.

JOHN BULL (*ironically*). I admire your perseverance, my child.

FRANCE (*drily*). Until the time comes when you will regret it.

JOHN BULL (*smiling*). I've plenty of time before me.

FRANCE. Not so much as you imagine. And you yourself, who love your ease so much—you are beginning to feel uncomfortable in the corners. The occupation of Egypt has considerably lessened your influence at

Constantinople ; and a good understanding between you and the Porte is of paramount importance.

JOHN BULL. Well, what of Said Pacha, who only recently placed himself under the protection of our Ambassador?

FRANCE. To clear out, without giving notice, a few days afterwards! Another blunder to add to the others.

You had the professional beauties in your country, where they invent such funny eccentricities. You were in want of the professional blunderer. The honour was reserved to you of filling up that blank. After turning beauty into a profession it was quite natural to see clumsiness elevated to the dignity of an institution.

And now there's the Commander of the Faithful making soft eyes at Russia and opening the Porte to him and showing you the door, while he discreetly circulates vague rumours of an alliance.

JOHN BULL. The alliance of the Turkey and the Bear would be rather an odd thing.

FRANCE. Not more so than that of the Turkey and the Lion. Whether he fall into the claws of the first or second, it is none the less his destiny to be

devoured. If he wasn't yet quite sure of the psychological moment when he would have one or other of these two noble stomachs as a coffin, Lord Salisbury's speech cannot have left him the least doubt in that respect.

The Sultan, turkey though he be, has, none the less, some self-esteem. Now, a simple gallinaceous bird, who not long ago caused a good deal of trouble to the estimable plantigrade to whom he is now showing favours, cannot feel very much flattered at hearing it said during his lifetime, even by the mouth of a Prime Minister of proud descent and high political intelligence, that his last hour has sounded and that the moment to cut him up alive has come; nor will he be pleased to see his fowl-house at Yildiz compared to the Augean stables, requiring a thorough cleansing out, or to learn that his promises mean nothing. It must be very painful to him to notice the confirmation, in this speech, that his days are ending amidst frightful senile imbecility, that it's time for him to get his traps together and relieve humanity of his presence. He probably considers it to be in very bad taste and very premature on the part of one who

has posed before his very eyes as his testamentary executor, to discount his patrimony in advance, and not have the delicacy to await his last gasp before handing over the inheritance to hands less senile and more fitted to turn it to account.

JOHN BULL. Anyhow, it's true.

FRANCE. I should not dare to say so with such brutal franknes as the venerable castellan of Hatfield, and, anyhow, it is not always pleasant to hear the truth. In fact, it is rather unbecoming to bid a person who is dying, make haste and finish his agony—to let "the sick man," as Turkey is called, know that his case is hopeless, his carcase only good to form a subject for vivisection, and, when he is preparing to render his last account, to yell into his ears that the blood of men, women, and children cries to Heaven for vengeance, and other amenities of the same kind.

JOHN BULL. But he is evil to the very last, this wretched creature who won't make up his mind to die and have done with it. See how he's treating Armenia!

FRANCE. Yes, it would seem to show that he is not so ill as they

say, if he has strength to bully those who are in his way and bother him. Besides, they are not worth much, those Armenians, that quintessence of Jews who play in Turkey the part that was performed less cleverly in Russia by their Semitic competitors.

Anyhow, the Turks are masters in their own country. They don't want your advice or ours. If they beat their wives and box their children's ears when they annoy them, it's their business after all, and nobody else's.

Did they call you to account for your rigorous treatment of poor Ireland, which you have so beautifully dragooned at different times? Did they request us to cease shooting down those wretched national guards like rabbits after the suppression of the Commune? Have they intervened, in any shape or way, in the internal quarrels of the States of Europe? Not in the least! Why the devil, then, go and bother about a few turbulent subjects of very little interest after all, whom they are chastising more or less severely or justly?

JOHN BULL. Whom they are massacring.

FRANCE. Even if they were! Just

as if they don't massacre more or less in Europe, and as if each of our great civilised States had not to their credit a nice lot of genuine atrocities perpetrated, on legal lines, in perfectly cold blood and with complete absence of scruple. And yet, has one or other of these paternal Powers ever come and poked its nose into the little private butcheries its neighbour was performing, or interrupted it at the tub when it was washing its dirty linen at home—Turkey any more than the others? Never! Never once! Well, why go and do to others what you would not like to have done to yourself? Why at every moment worry the life out of this unfortunate invalid, who is nearly done up—who does not annoy you in the least, and only asks to be allowed to expire in peace?

JOHN BULL. Turkey is completely disorganised, and one ought to help it out of its position.

FRANCE. As Dr. Peters and others wished to help Emin Pasha, who did not want to be helped at all. So as to get Constantinople, as they wanted to get Uganda. "One ought to help it," freely expressed, means: England should help

it as you help Egypt—to become accustomed to the English yoke. Too late, my friend: the seat is taken, and the person occupying it has no idea of giving it up; he is big enough also to defend it.

JOHN BULL. The place or Turkey?

FRANCE. Both; and if the turkey must be eaten, it is useless to ask with what sauce, or who will carve it?

JOHN BULL. Nor who will be the guests at the banquet. You are on such good terms with your new acquaintance.

FRANCE. Yes. We agree very well.

JOHN BULL. You are lucky. I don't agree with any one. Everybody gives me the cold shoulder, when they don't show me absolute hostility.

FRANCE. You are what *you* term *splendidly isolated*. We call that *tomber dans la melasse ou la panade*, or, as you term it in English slang, being in a hobble or going a mucker; it's less poetical and sonorous, but truer, and it's not at all funny, I can assure you, although you seem to consider the thing amusing—a way you have of gilding the pill.

JOHN BULL (*proudly*). Nevertheless,

I've worked for humanity; I've civilised half the world.

FRANCE. Worked for your own pocket and despoiled half the universe. For your system of civilisation has brought you a pretty good return, and you still wish to apply it to certain pieces which you've forgotten and the other Powers wish also—to civilise.

JOHN BULL. But Australia, the Cape?——

FRANCE. The aborigines have been driven away, been decimated or besotted by alcohol, as was done to the Redskins by your cousins in the United States.

JOHN BULL. As you did with the Arabs in Algeria.

FRANCE. As we have done. And instead of assimilating them to us, which would have been an act of civilisation, we have assimilated their territory, as you have done, which is nothing but barbarity in the highest degree.

JOHN BULL. But we have created a new nation there, in the full flower of life and progress.

FRANCE. Of course. When the sheep are devoured the wolves don't eat one another. They agree as they can, and, generally speaking, not very well.

The Transvaal, which you feign to take for a sheep escaped from the flock, resists, and is unwilling to pass into the grill-room.

No! No more than we or the others, have you civilised infant people. You have destroyed or domesticated them, and you continue out there beyond the ocean, what Europe is doing at home—business; and business is not a very clean sort of thing. If you call that civilisation, you might just as well say at once that the Panama people and the highwaymen of Cecil Rhodes are benefactors of humanity.

In our time, my friend, you colonise to fill your pocket—you, more than any one else, simply because you have more of that sort of land at your disposal and, having had it longer, are more accustomed than the others to the profession, and—I don't make a crime of it in you—you perform on a large scale and with a masterly hand what the others try on a scale of more restricted dimensions and with a hand less experienced. That naturally provokes jealousy among your less fortunate and more timid rivals.

Rome at least constructed arenas,

temples, roads, for the victims of its spoliations; Carthage muzzled, shoed, and crucified the vanquished, her slaves, taking all their property, their labour and their lives. If you are not Carthage, you are not Rome either. Those beasts of prey were of a different stamp to you, had another splendour of manner in vice, an ampler capacity for the terrible and odious, and the frightful heroes have given place to humble epigoni. After Napoleon the great, Napoleon the little.

JOHN BULL. Well, the Anglo-Saxon hegemony exists.

FRANCE. The hegemony of debit and credit, as with Germany—the hegemony of the sabre; and that will pass away.

JOHN BULL. It holds firm.

FRANCE. It is already passing away. Europe is contending with you for yours. Ill-omened creakings in the scaffolding of the Triple Alliance, erected to support Germany, seem to indicate that it has not many days to last, that it is like the sick man of Constantinople, if not worse.

Every hegemony, like every saviour, is a danger to universal liberty. That of Charles V. in the sixteenth, of Louis

XIV. in the seventeenth century, have been prejudicial to the world, as would be an Anglo-Saxon hegemony resulting from the founding of a colossal Empire, one and compact, composed of the union of all your colonies indissolubly bound together, and to the mother country. Europe perceives the danger and desires to parry it ; that is why they hate you, as you bitterly acknowledge.

International equity, failing immanent justice, which is still in the embryo stage, cannot stand being violated beyond measure. If it receives a black eye it knows how to punch your nose ; and you have handled the beauty roughly, my friend.

Your off-hand way of treating people has contributed a good deal to strengthen our alliance with Russia ; it has strained the relations between both of us, and has alienated you from Germany, who looks with rather an evil eye on the aggressive fancies of Dr. Jameson against the Boers, who have given him a thoroughly good and well-deserved lesson at Krugersdorp.

JOHN BULL (*hastily*). The Government has disavowed his action.

FRANCE. Because the stroke was premature. The Teutons showed their

teeth, and Europe was indignant at the sight of this former sawbones, clerk of a Chartered Company, promoted to the rank of a staff-officer, transforming himself *ex abrupto* into a *reiter* chieftain and highwayman.

JOHN BULL. But when I tell you the Government didn't know the slightest thing about Dr. Jameson's goings on, and that we deserve no blame on that account, particularly after the formal disavowal telegraphed to him by Chamberlain——

FRANCE. My dear friend, what has just taken place in the Transvaal proves once more your want of method—your incapacity to call things by their name, or else your fearful duplicity; one or the other.

JOHN BULL. Always perfidious Albion, eh?

FRANCE. Not always, but often. One cannot be a trafficker with impunity, my friend, and the nature of your occupations always leaves its mark on your way of proceeding. You always imagine yourself behind your counter in your shop, clinching a bargain, and you treat politics as you would transact business. But, in business, people don't pride

themselves, so far as I know, on an excess of probity. In this world to dupe a person is simply a peccadillo, and to ruin a competitor is a thing common enough—bringing your skill into relief, without in the least injuring your reputation.

JOHN BULL. But my responsibility is covered. I have absolutely nothing to do with this prank of a mere agent of a private company.

FRANCE. Prank is a charming euphemism to disguise this unqualifiable crime of *lèse-nation*, perpetrated by a salaried servant of your Chartered Company. In a word, my friend, you are struggling in this dilemna. Either Dr. Jameson undertook this iniquitous expedition without your knowledge, on his own authority, and proceeded with it in contempt of your formal injunctions to retire at once—in which case you are abominably ill-informed as to the doings of your subordinates, who act without consulting you, and impudently transgress your orders when you give them any, thus displaying the weakness of your authority and what little attention your functionaries pay to it, and generally the incoherence of your system of ad-

ministration; or else, the business was previously concocted behind the scenes, whilst you closed your eyes and let matters take their course, watching the shape events would assume, so as to be able to take advantage of the accomplished fact, or disavow the author of the wretched failure—and that would show, on your part, a lamentable want of scruple. Out of respect for you, I prefer to believe in the insubordination, however improbable it may appear, of this ex-conqueror of Lobengula, suddenly taken with a fit of warlike fever, rather than in a criminal premeditation on your part, notwithstanding its probability, which I am pleased to believe is only apparent.

JOHN BULL. And you may be sure of it, my dear friend, although we seem overwhelmed with facts.

FRANCE. The logic of facts, like that of figures, is beyond discussion. A few moments ago you considered logic was sometimes impertinent; it's a pity you should now have to remark that it is also, at times, cruel.

JOHN BULL. Unhappily!

FRANCE. If Oom Paul has not cut off the tortoise's head, he has anyhow

KRUGER AND THE TORTOISE.

injured its neck a good deal, whilst manifestly twisting its vertebra ; and there you are, thanks to one of those tricks of chance—of that chance you generally direct so cleverly—in a passably equivocal position, and one that is assuredly very delicate. If, like Pontius Pilate, you wash your hands of this act of international brigandage, you are branded with all the ridicule of an odious aggression which has miserably failed, was commenced without your sanction, carried out in flagrant opposition to your peremptory orders, and repelled, *unguibus et rostro*, amid loss and *fracas*. If, on the other hand, you assume the responsibility for this plot by seeking to avenge the discomfiture of the Uitlanders, or to annex the Transvaal, you find yourself under the stigma of an act of consummate filibustering, which places you outside the pale of nations.

As a result in both cases, the Transvaal Republic—the South African rather —rallies round her all that is Dutch, frees herself from her suzerainty towards you, and claims her complete independence at the same time as the opposition of the two races is affirmed and the divergence of their interests increases.

It's a wedge struck into the flank of your black Empire, which remains cut in two pieces, separated by a people to whom you are to say the least antipathetic.

You have to deal with a strong and energetic race, self-opinionated as the deuce, obstinate to the last degree, which has stored up against you a long period of rancour, and the blind hostility of which will paralyse all your efforts to assimilate two antagonistic and irreducible elements. The one will infallibly eliminate the other, and that other will be the Anglo-Saxon element, too weak to struggle against these rude primitives, self-contained, cold, tenacious in their ideas, insisting on the maintenance of an independence they have always known how to uphold, and which they prize above everything else.

Jameson, with his stupid and presumptuous freak, if one admits that it did not originate in another quarter, has given the final blow to your preponderance, and, in spite of himself, created a Dutch Africa for the future.

Power has virtually changed hands. It's merely a question of time for it to have the sanction of a *fait accompli*.

Oom Paul is master of the situation,

my poor John Bull. Ridicule or dishonour, perhaps both—that is the alternative resulting from this international blunder; together with the loss, within a short time, of South Africa.

JOHN BULL. The prospect is alluring; but can we, I ask you, submit to such humiliation after the successive checks the Boers have already inflicted on us at Majuba Hill and elsewhere?

FRANCE. The question of preserving one's honour overrides that of *amour propre*, my friend. A scratch given to your vanity is a bagatelle, but a rent in your conscience is far more serious. And when, voluntarily or not, a man has sunk over his shoulder-blades in the results of his own wrong-doing, the only manner in any way worthy to extricate himself is to attenuate his fault, if he cannot repair it, by frankly acknowledging, and doing his utmost to remedy, the evil that may have resulted from it.

JOHN BULL. To excuse would be to accuse myself, and I feel repugnance for that sort of task. I should not care to frame my own indictment.

FRANCE. In certain cases it is better to be one's own judge, my dear John

Bull, than to leave that duty to others. It is more honourable, and also more profitable. One has always treasures of indulgence within oneself and for oneself, that one would not find in others.

JOHN BULL. Bah! *Alea jacta est!* Let things take their course—come what may! My loins are solid, my purse is full, and I've got through worse than this. (*Gaily.*) "We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too." It's as true to-day as ever.

FRANCE (*seriously*). Always the same old story. Jingo and Chauvin are cut on the same pattern; "Hands off, Germany!" is equal to our "A Berlin!" You are boasting to-day of having vessels, men, money; we also, formerly, declared in the face of Heaven that not a single button was wanting.

JOHN BULL. What did not fail you, my valiant friend, was your courage, which made your defeat heroic.

FRANCE. Yes, our poor sons fought well against those hordes broken to discipline with the stick; but we had to give way to numbers, and the gaping wound laid open in the *année terrible* by the German sabre is not yet healed. God grant that you may not be subjected

to such trials! It is hard to rise from them.

JOHN BULL. To see you, one would never think so, my handsome friend. You are as fresh, as well, as smart as ever. No one would ever think that, some twenty-five years ago, you were at the point of death, or thereabouts, at the mercy of those vile, booted and helmeted, carnivorous beings. The sight of so speedy and complete a recovery of your strength is calculated to give your ex-conquerors a flea in their ears, and they'll think twice now before picking a quarrel with you.

FRANCE. They can seek a derivative somewhere else. At present they seem to want to take your measure.

JOHN BULL. A struggle is not possible between Germany and us. A boar, even a domestic one, cannot fight a whale. The Germans are land animals; we are aquatic. They, who are at their ease on dry land, are poor creatures on the water, where we are in our element. We defy them to land in our island while our vessels guard our coasts; and we have no intention of going to fight them in their own country, to get stupidly cut to pieces. Every German

ship that takes the risk of putting to sea will be sunk. We shall only make a mouthful of their fleet if it dares to show itself.

Therefore, with no field of operations at their disposal, these worthy Teutons are quite powerless, whereas we, as free as the air, cover the seas with our flying squadrons, falling upon everything carrying the German flag, with plenty of elbow-room, which is what we like more than anything else, as you very justly remarked. We collar their African colonies without the least difficulty, and that will complete our vast African empire, especially if we purchase Mozambique from the Portuguese.

When tired of standing waiting at ease, watching us plundering them, they will clamour for peace at the pitch of their voice. It will be granted them on condition of accepting the *fait accompli* and countersigning the Act abandoning their colonies, and acquiescing definitively in the occupation by their—kinsmen of all the territory previously occupied by them in Africa.

That is all Germany would have to gain in a war with us, and she is too artful to embark lightly on such an

adventure, unless this semblance of a quarrel be a roundabout way of getting rid of her Colonies, an ingenious manner of making us a present which is hardly likely.

She made a snap inaptly, has repented of it, and has returned precipitately into her kennel. Let her remain there and leave us alone once for all.

FRANCE. And suppose America intervenes, in concert with Germany?

JOHN BULL (*shrugging his shoulders*). She will not intervene.

FRANCE. You are optimistic.

JOHN BULL. We are cousins of the Yankees, and cousins don't fight; they snarl at each other, but it all leads to nothing.

FRANCE. But Cleveland? His message?

JOHN BULL (*disdainfully*). Messages!—why Cleveland is our best friend. His newspaper—I forget the name—is already suggesting that we should come to a direct understanding with Venezuela. In a fortnight he'll declare Venezuela unreasonable, and in a month he'll proclaim we're right all along the line, and that this little Republic is a fool to have so thoughtlessly placed herself in such a

ridiculous position. Venezuela already perceives it.

FRANCE. Venezuela?

JOHN BULL. Venezuela! Her Consul General in the United States has declared that "American protection would be disastrous for the commercial and private interests of the country, whatever the issue of the conflict may be."

FRANCE. But they have just burnt Lord Salisbury in effigy, those Venezuelans.

JOHN BULL. An indirect way of burying the question—these semi-savages are so strange in their manners and customs.

FRANCE (*amusea*). And the Commission of Investigation?

JOHN BULL. Fudge! like all creations of that sort, a civility of Cleveland to some of his friends suffering from liver, a hygienic trip at Government expense. (*Extending his arm towards heaven.*) Commissions! Good gracious! (*In a tone of commiseration.*) You believe in them, those commissions?

FRANCE (*gaily*). You simply flabbergast me, John Bull. What an imperturbable serenity in your way of regarding things!

JOHN BULL. Well! I know my Yankee to the tips of his fingers, and he will not play at diamond cut diamond with me. As the old cock crows, so crows the young, and we come from the same farmyard. Have you seen me make a movement? arm a single vessel? call out a single regiment after that fulminating message of my friend on the other side of the Atlantic? Go along with you! I know what tall talk amounts to! England and America have no more intention of fighting than I have of chucking myself into the water.

FRANCE. Then all this noise, all this warlike flourish of trumpets——

JOHN BULL. Simply a nervous attack on the part of my dear cousin, the result of a change of diet, an exaggerated overflow of bile. The sharpness of the symptoms somewhat surprised us at the beginning, but the phases of the disease followed their normal course, and its development, having been forseen, neither alarmed nor affected us. They are as atrabilious as the devil, those good cousins of ours, and very subject to such attacks, the consequences of which, however, have never been taken seriously, either by them or by us. It was a pretext

for mutually complimenting one another. Advantage was taken of the opportunity to call to mind by cable dispatches that the same blood in different latitudes ran in the veins of the two cousins, and to point out that this blood was of such fine quality that it would really be a pity to spill it like a mere pail of water. Blood must be taken into account; and the strength of our Christian kinship has been too great on both sides of the Atlantic for passion to have the advantage of reason.

France. Beware! Reason often hauls down its flag to passion.

John Bull. Why say that, when in America Senator Walcott remarks that Venezuela should be grateful to Great Britain, as British Volunteers had fought in all South American struggles. Even now, Venezuela, without Great Britain's aid, might not be free. The peoples of South America, he says, have shown themselves unfitted for self-government, and this is especially the case as regards Venezuela. He hopes the boundary line will be rightfully found to place the gold mines where English-speaking people, who develop them, will not be subjected to the cupidity of the

half-breeds of Venezuela, but under the protection of English common law. He regrets that the United States have made it difficult for Great Britain to accept arbitration, yet he doubts whether hostilities will result, because Great Britain will yield, he thinks, rather than face the horrors of such a war on such a question.

And he goes on to say that when he read that France, Germany, and Russia were allied against Great Britain and that the people of the British Isles, in defence of what they deem their rights, were marshalling armies and assembling navies, ready to face the world in arms, undaunted and unafraid, he thanked God he was of that race. "Blood," he says in conclusion, "is thicker than water, and until a just quarrel divides us, which Heaven forbid, may these two great nations of the same speech, tongue, and traditions, stand as brothers, shoulder to shoulder in the interests of humanity, by a union-compelling peace."

In the interval, a little stock exchange operation concerning American securities, and rather disastrous for the American market, produced a salutary effect on the nerves of our well-beloved cousins, whose attack calmed down as if by enchantment;

and fraternal affection suddenly returned with their restoration to health. The stomach exercises such great control over the nervous system and heart, and these two have such a close connection with the purse !

Jonathan and myself are, and will always remain, believe me, the best friends in the world.

As to Germany, it's quite another tune. We accept a fit of ill-humour from an irritable cousin who may have had a fit ; but we will never submit to the uncouthness of an ill-bred neighbour whose impecunious progeny, welcomed and entertained by us so affably, come and beg for our leavings, when they don't take our place at table. With those miserable beggars, we don't take the trouble to put on gloves, and we promptly snatch up the one they dare to fling in our face.

France. It's not I who would blame you.

John Bull. And then, my friend, you say that Africa is virtually lost to us and that even now a huge Republic, the embryo of which will be that of the Boers, is being sketched out in South Africa, and later on will draw into its centre of

attraction and swallow up all our possessions, which will have become Dutch. The thing would be possible—even probable—if we, bowing to the Rodomontades of those gentlemen of Berlin, were to accept their intervention in the affairs of the Transvaal and cede the rights, however slight they be, conferred on us by the treaty of 1884. Then, Germany would meddle in the government of this independent State—would, little by little, substitute its influence for ours, pour into the land a flood of useless mouths, drowning the handful of Boers in its wave of invasion overflowing north, west, and south, and within a given time would absorb our possessions and create a powerful German and not a Dutch Africa; the two other elements—Dutch and English—having been eliminated by the Teuton element.

But a colossal Germanic Empire in Africa, with thousands of military colonists, besides an army of occupation composed of men cordially hating you, would be far more threatening to the security of your colonies on the dark continent, than our Empire can be.

As a matter of fact, we get on pretty well together, and our proximity, after

all, is much less dangerous to your interests than theirs would be; and it's better to have a neighbour with whom you can agree than a disagreeable party who only watches for an opportunity to do you mischief.

The treaty of 1884, whether it confers the right of suzerainty over the Transvaal or not, authorises us not to allow any treaty to be concluded by the Boers with other Powers without our sanction, and we shall maintain this treaty at any cost, as Chamberlain very positively declared. To cancel it would be an act of unpardonable weakness, especially under existing circumstances. It would be abdicating our position as a great African power; and one only abdicates when forced to do so by events, and such is not the case at present.

FRANCE. But does not Jameson's aggression, in violation of the law of nations, justify the Boers in tearing the treaty to bits, considering it null and void, and in rending asunder the last bond uniting them to you?

JOHN BULL. The English Government had no hint of these intrigues.

FRANCE. Which had been going on for the past eight months with the

knowledge of every one except the parties most interested. You have a Government, my friend, which is very ill-informed.

JOHN BULL. Perhaps so; but it is none the less the fact that, at the first news they received, they telegraphed to the invaders to stop, on receipt of the order.

FRANCE. Of the counter-order would be more correct. The entertainment was countermanded on account of bad weather. Notwithstanding the urgency and peremptory tone of the dispatch, however, they went on. Your Government is really very badly obeyed.

JOHN BULL. Could any one ever have supposed such machinations could be brewing in the midst of peace?

FRANCE. That such entirely unforeseen obstacles would hinder their execution, rather, my dear friend.

JOHN BULL. You are impossible. You always alter the nature of the best intentions to give them the aspect that suits you.

FRANCE. To place them in their true light, my good John Bull.

JOHN BULL. That is to say, you distort them atrociously, so as to adapt them to the use you desire to make of

them, and give them the appearance you wish them to have.

FRANCE (*correcting*). The appearance they should have, Mr. John Bull.

JOHN BULL. This is too much! Your assurance is simply astounding. The masterly way in which you diagnose the disease and operate upon the body of public events, would do credit to a specialist. But I'm afraid you use the knife with unpardonable imprudence and handle the scalpel with a freedom only equalled by your incredible levity and the profound disdain you show for what people will say. What an experienced surgeon you seem to be, for a woman!

FRANCE. The new woman — you know—who has something wrong with her brain as well as her manners. But, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones, my good fellow. Your Esculapius, so spontaneously transformed into a son of Mars, cast aside his scalpel for the rifle. He would have done better, in the general interest, to have left that weapon hanging on the nail and have stuck to his professional instrument, instead of rushing unreasonably to trouble the repose of those worthy farmers of the Transvaal, who don't care to be

disturbed for nothing, particularly in that way; and they've shown him so.

If I hack facts about as you accuse me of doing, it is out of pure love for truth. I hack—with discernment; I dissect them, my dear friend, so as to be able to study them better, discover the undercurrents, elucidate the ambiguous sides of them. I draw rigorous conclusions and obtain absolute certainties.

JOHN BULL. That is a very strict and exclusive dialectic, my honey.

FRANCE. Well, one must play a very cautious game with you. We have made pretty good progress in the art of understanding things thoroughly, both to teach ourselves and to teach others. We are logical, in fact. And this little surgical operation will no doubt be of incontestable service to enlighten the public in general on what has just happened, and prevent public opinion sinking in the quicksands of your explanations. But you were just now narrating, with many embellishments and much ingenuity, a delightful story. I am all attention. Pray continue! Really I quite enjoy hearing the little farce!

JOHN BULL (*who is offended at the word "farce"*). Upon my word, you

treat me as a mere commercial traveller, telling a good story in the coffee-room.

FRANCE. And also as a man whose singular aptitude I recognise. But, admitting the commercial element—come now, isn't it all a matter of shop, this badly managed affray, stupidly provoked by a Chartered Commercial Company, taking it into their heads one fine morning, without saying either why or wherefore, not even to their dear Government, to advance the frontiers of the British Empire?

Come! my dear fellow, a little modesty. Let us class this ugly business, this shady enterprise, with those of its kind, and don't try and give it an importance that it doesn't deserve, a notoriety that can only damage both it and you. Let it lie on the shelf, and place it on your profit-and-loss account. You were saying, then——

JOHN BULL. Let me see. Where was I? You have been pulling me about so roughly that I've lost the thread of my story. Ah! I know. I was telling you the English Government was ignorant of these manœuvres, and you said that was not your opinion.

FRANCE. Nor is it any more my

opinion now, notwithstanding all your denials and all your efforts to convince me to the contrary.

JOHN BULL. You are more incredulous than Saint Thomas. However, as soon as the Government got wind of the affair, Chamberlain immediately and energetically repudiated this crime of high treason. I don't suppose you doubt his good faith for a moment?

FRANCE. The logic of facts would justify me in doing so, but the formal assurance you give me of his honesty in the matter, compels me not to insist further. In any case I render full justice to the promptness of his decision and the firmness of his conduct. He's a minister with a grip, your Chamberlain.

JOHN BULL. Who would have made a first-rate prefect in France under the Second Empire.

FRANCE. Oh! a Minister, even, and a smart one. He does not flinch at a trifle, and, what is far from being a disadvantage, he is so "pushful!"—and in your country that impresses people. But he's troubled to excess with the speechifying mania. He draws, incidentally, unfortunate comparisons between the size of Queensland and that of other States, for

instance, emphasising them with a superfluous dose of Jingoism. He has, moreover, the weakness, astonishing in a man of his capacity, to lay stress on, instead of lightly passing over, the excellence of his policy.

JOHN BULL. Oh, these are merely slight defects, bringing into relief the brilliancy of his talents. Well, then! From the moment this armed incursion into friendly territory took place, without the knowledge, and consequently without the participation, of the English Government, and in spite of its unquestionable orders to discontinue at once, it becomes nothing more than an expedition of marauders, an offence against common law which comes within the competency of the police-magistrate or the Assizes.

FRANCE. Crime of high treason.

JOHN BULL. Flagrant disobedience of the Queen's commands, I admit, but which only concerns our Government.

FRANCE. And also that of the Transvaal, I think.

JOHN BULL. Also, indirectly.

FRANCE. Indirectly?

JOHN BULL. Certainly. It is not England as a Power that attacks; it is Englishmen, simply private individuals,

without a mandate, acting on their own authority and disavowed from the beginning. They are under arrest, and will be judged and punished according to law.

FRANCE. For form's sake! and rewarded afterwards. Jameson has won his Marshall's staff at Krugersdorp, in the shape of a baronetcy, if not more.

JOHN BULL. That's a presumption on your part.

FRANCE. One that is well founded, I think.

JOHN BULL. Besides, damages will be paid to the injured parties; which is only just. But that does not in any way imply the enforced abandonment of our rights, which remain, and will remain, intact, I can assure you.

FRANCE. Public opinion, however, in England, is all in favour of Jameson and his band, who are heroes, glorified at the music-halls.

JOHN BULL (*profoundly disdainful, shrugging his shoulders*). Public Opinion! We'll change public opinion! Does it exist by itself? It's we who form it. It's as malleable as putty, yielding as a glove, and can be turned inside out in the same way. It obeys like a poodle.

A note inserted in one of the newspapers which are a little bit read and it performs a pirouette. A word and it barks; a sign and it is mute. It is a clown of marvellous flexibility, of inconceivable servility and incomparable obedience.

Public Opinion is the epitome of the embodied imbecility and banality of the crowd, the formula in which the inchoate scoria of the human intellect are daily condensed into insipid and tyrannical aphorisms. It is a vague thing, indefinable and incoherent to the last degree, stupidly good-natured, superlatively cruel, supremely simple, and absolutely unconscientious.

Oh, yes! Public Opinion is a delightful thing—an old addle-pate who contradicts herself, and unblushingly reverses her own judgment at each turn of the road; loses her wits at any minute; goes into fits over the first acrobat who comes forward, to let him slide twenty-four hours afterwards; elevates the fellow to the skies in the morning, nails him to the pillory at night; is moved to pity at the tragic end of a mummer, and has neither regret nor pity at the death of a disheartened genius: a cringing slave of

respectability, who, with a yelp, causes millions to fall into the money-bags of religious, hypocritical, and noisy mountebanks, and can never find an obolus for noble and uncomplaining misery.

How can you take for guide, for criterion, this unseizable Proteus, this constantly deviating compass, with movements impossible to control or foresee ?

Public Opinion ! you govern it. It's a vixen who can be dompted just as Petruchio put Katharina through her paces—for if the hussy has agreeable moments of base servility, she has also fearful hours of savage revolt.

FRANCE. A velvet glove and an iron hand is what is required to master the brute when it kicks, and you have both, although the velvet of your glove is somewhat rough.

JOHN BULL. It is cheek, my beauty, and you will grant me that I have a certain dose of that.

FRANCE. Public Opinion may be seized with a sudden fit of rage—quite unexpectedly, like the headstrong deed of Jameson ; an outburst of anger you would be unable to control.

JOHN BULL. I am not a novice, my child : I know how to calm these in-

congruous transports. I treat them in a radical manner. I do as Kruger announced his intention of doing. I wait until the animal has stretched out his neck, and then cut its head off.

FRANCE. Then beware of consequences, for the creature has more than nine lives; its agony is terrible, and its final convulsions are to be feared.

JOHN BULL. Not more than the ideas of claiming independence that have been so ingeniously suggested or attributed to the Boers.

FRANCE. In any case, my dear John Bull, one thing was necessary before all, after Jameson's unqualifiable aggression.

JOHN BULL. And that was——?

FRANCE. To have immediately expressed to their President, regret at what had just occurred, a simple act of courtesy.

If inadvertently one of your servants gives a blow to a gentleman of your acquaintance I suppose you owe the latter an apology, apart from the rebuke you may address to your valet. Instead of that, you hastened to express to President Kruger the hope—that he would not chastise the author of this sinister pleasantry, and his co-partners,

as they deserved. Chamberlain telegraphed to Sir Henry Loch: . . . "Do your best for the prisoners to be treated generously and the wounded taken care of. Telegraph their names and news of the wounded." Absolutely as if they looked upon Kruger as a Red Indian, capable of fastening his prisoners to the stake, or a cannibal making ready to devour them with a pinch of salt. Not a word of condolence for the despoiled, and an appeal for indulgence for the spoiler!

Much pity was expressed at the sufferings of these unfortunate redressors of wrongs, crushed by numbers, when it is averred now that at the commencement of the fight they had to deal with barely four hundred Boers. Compassion was felt at their misfortunes. It broke people's hearts to learn that they had remained two days and more without eating or drinking, the poor filibusterers. People deplored their want of success, and words were not strong enough to describe the cowardly inertness of the Uitlanders of Johannesburg who did not dare shoulder up to their doughty defenders of the widow and orphan, whose masterly ride was celebrated by Alfred Austin, your poet laureate. People were

so anxious about the fate reserved for them by the victorious as to be unable to sleep. They wept over the deaths of these "glorious vanquished," without one word of pity going to the humble heroes who fell in the defence of their homes against invasion.

People even pushed the absurdity to the length of reproaching the Boers with having fired the first shot (which is not true), as if, before taking the burglar, surprised in the act of breaking into your house, by the scruff of the neck, you had to doff your hat to him and politely beg him to withdraw.

A very high and noble lady, whilst Jameson was in the hands of the Boers, took the public into her confidence and told them in the following terms the high opinion she professed for this pharmaceutical paladin and the poor esteem she had for his vulgar adversaries.

"It surpasses all imagination that the English press should be so forgetful of its traditions as to discuss calmly the execution of Englishmen by the Boers. If this nomad tribe went to camp in the Transvaal, was it not simply because our nation would no longer permit unutterable outrages to be perpetrated on the

negro race, and slavery to flourish under our flag?

"If Jameson and his valiant companions (who have done what every Englishman worthy of the name would have done) are put to death in cold blood by the Boers, there will no longer be room in South Africa for a Republic administered by their murderers. Neither German jealousy nor French jealousy should weigh in the balance at such a moment.

"'Filibusterers,' 'Pirates'! are those English gentlemen, known personally to several amongst us, who are so called because they responded to an appeal for help from the majority of the respectable inhabitants of a great City."

Well, with the permission of her illustrious ladyship, what "surpasses all imagination" is to have had, under these circumstances, the courage to write a letter conceived in such terms and to plead such a cause.

From higher, from more august quarters, President Kruger, who had sent his prisoners to get—hanged, or judged, elsewhere, was informed, through the intermediary of an official, of the satisfaction that was felt, and no more.

But in an explosion of quasi-maternal solicitude, the family of one of these "noble misled," an officer of the Crown who was one of Jameson's band, was warmly congratulated, and words could not be found to express all the joy that was felt at seeing that their noble offspring had issued from the mess uninjured.

To sum up: high and low, wreaths were woven for the "apostles of duty." They celebrated in dithyrambic measure the unfortunate courage, the apotheosis of the vanquished of Krugersdorp; they exalted the policy of Cecil Rhodes, and supported the Chartered Company, that sinister trinity of outlaws whose dubious proceedings had, for the sake of putting a little gold in their coffers, almost compromised the peace of the world.

Barely a short, dry allusion was made, in a few papers from time to time, to the violation of territory, to the magnanimity of the vanquished. In the others, for a mere nothing, Kruger would have been placed on his trial as the real culprit, the fomentor of the troubles, the instigator of the hostilities and the cause of the death of those dozen-and-a-half chivalrous cut-throats.

JOHN BULL. Lord! Lor'! my pretty friend, you're going a bit far!

FRANCE. Not so far as one of your most influential newspapers, which develops the stupefying theory that Kruger was the principal culprit, because, knowing of the conspiracy brewing against his Government, he did not upset it before the heroic doctor and the unfortunate reformers of Johannesburg were irrevocably comprised. After that, one must not be astonished at anything.

JOHN BULL. They defended themselves so courageously!

FRANCE. Of course! And they required a good lot of courage to transgress to such a point the laws of their country and the orders of their chiefs.

As to the resistance they offered, however desperate it may have been, it deserved to be censured, and not praised, and the reverse happened.

Pirates driven to bay always fight well. Since when has their bravery been viewed in the light of attenuating circumstances, or exonerated them from their crime? If a malefactor tries to break the neck of a gendarme who is endeavouring to arrest him, ought the

former to be decorated on that account, or congratulated on his conduct! That, nevertheless, is what the multitude has done to Jameson. They have made him an ovation on his return. His journey from the docks to his cell has been a triumphal march, his appearance at the bar an apotheosis. His acquittal is indubitable, his ulterior reward a certainty.

JOHN BULL. The mob is not the Government.

FRANCE. But the Government will suffer the pressure of the mob.

JOHN BULL. But are they not the sons of Great Britain, Englishmen—gentlemen?

FRANCE. Persons who have forfeited their honour and compromised the name of England have lost their quality of gentlemen and the right to any consideration; they are no longer anything but culprits, amenable to justice.

JOHN BULL. You are very severe upon these unfortunate people.

FRANCE. Not more severe than a worthy Anglo-Saxon who, under the signature of "Disgusted" in the *Daily News* was indignant to see that no demonstration was made on the arrival

at Fenchurch Street of the soldiers returning from Ashantee after having simply and bravely done their duty, whilst Jameson's troopers, on the other hand, who had dragged the English flag in the mud, and whose exploits were sung and cheered to the echo at the music-halls, were received with the wildest enthusiasm.

JOHN BULL. Do you blame Kruger's clemency in regard to them ?

FRANCE. No, I admire it. He acted like a good-hearted man, strong in his right. I am even glad that these misled people—I speak of the simple soldiers—these blind instruments of an unscrupulous Company, directed by an ambitious personage with a bellicose Esculapius for his mere instrumental accomplice, should have escaped the lot awaiting them, however well-deserved it may have been. But the real authors of the evil, the chiefs, those holding rank in the service of the Crown, should be punished for the dual crime of high treason against the nations and high treason against England. The charter of the undeserving Company should be annulled, Cecil Rhodes and Jameson recalled, tried, and imprisoned.

JOHN BULL. They are in England for that purpose.

FRANCE. Except Cecil Rhodes, the boss of the affair, who is taking fresh air, and after obtaining the password in London, returned a week later to South Africa, where he had previously ingenuously announced that he was only just making his *début*—which promises nice things for the future.

JOHN BULL. They will be tried, I tell you.

FRANCE. And acquitted, I repeat.

JOHN BULL. Justice is blind, my dear friend; no one can prejudge her decrees, and we ought to bow to them.

FRANCE. She only squints, sometimes; and she will be doing so now, if what I presume occurs.

JOHN BULL. Wait, my dear friend, to express yourself, until events show you to be right and the case has been tried.

FRANCE. And the Boers laughed at and sacrificed.

JOHN BULL. Oh! we have no need to have recourse to force for that. We shall leave them quietly alone, and in less than twenty years, without infringing

their rights in any way, there will be no more Boers.

FRANCE (*stupefied*). No more Boers?

JOHN BULL. Not a single one. This Franco-Dutch association of discontented Huguenots, this lugubrious society of surly bigots with inflexible character, made up of a Puritan stiffness and Jacobin arrogance, this band of stoics and tedious breeders of cattle, will have seen their day. The Boer of Majuba Hill and Krugersdorp is disappearing, as the epiornis and the drontes have recently disappeared from Madagascar, and the mammoth from the surface of the globe. Joubert, Kruger, and their companions, are the last survivors of the species.

The gold and diamond mines of the Rand, which enrich and enervate them at the same time, on the one hand, and, on the other, the occupation by Cecil Rhodes of all the territory bordering on the Republic, cutting off from them any retreat towards the north-west, contains the germs of dissolution which at a given moment will disorganise the State and destroy this race of hardy nomad shepherds, of rustic habits and austere manners, stern and sad sectarians, ploughing with their rifle at their

shoulder; hard on themselves, pitiless to the blacks, and redoubtable to their enemies; great children, madly captivated by independence.

The Transvaal mines will be the tomb of this uncompromising Republic, refractory to modern ideas, improvised in a corner of Africa, a patent absurdity, which modern logic does not accept.

From the bowels of this land loaded with gold, where thousands of the disclassed, of adventurers of all nations, as rapacious as famished wolves in their search after the terrible metal, the coveted precious stones, are engulfed daily, will issue the inevitable necessity for the Boers to bend to a force they will be unable to resist. This avowal of their want of power to struggle against destiny will consummate the sacrifice of the independence of this indomitable race, loitering willingly on the confines of a former period, sulking with civilisation—of these remnants of the past, striking majestic and biblical attitudes, out of date and almost ridiculous in our times. One will kill the other. Gold will bring luxury, luxury will break the tenacious will, soften the muscles of

these audacious pioneers who, to escape this progress which drives them onward and which they abhor, will no longer have before them immense territories to trek to and settle in, with their primitive waggons and innumerable herds. The still-swelling flood of Anglo-Saxon people, that powerful and irresistible rising tide of human activity, will within a short time cover the land, and the stationary Boer will be swept away, swallowed up in the mass, absorbed by the active and more numerous new race.

Then one day, Oom Paul, discouraged, tired of struggling without hope, will hang his rifle up over the chimney-piece like a family souvenir, a venerable relic of heroic times. He will be less sombre, of a humour less morose, will read the Bible less, and the news of the day more. The intrepid squatter of former times, with the eagle eye and unfailing aim, will wear spectacles, will be a clerk, a counter-jumper, a functionary. The veldt ranger will fix his wandering hearth. The undisciplined sharpshooter of the bush will be drafted into our battalions. He will speak our language, marry our girls, serve our

interests, which will have become his. He will be, as happens in that case, more English than the English, a loyal subject, having forgotten that one day his ancestors checked even that powerful nation Great Britain, and defeated her best troops with a handful of theirs.

That, my dear friend, is what awaits the Transvaal before twenty years, without our exercising the least harsh usage —without our touching a single one of their prerogatives. Three quarters of Africa Anglo-Saxon, heart and soul, a second and colossal England, strong and vivacious, implanted in the heart of the Dark Continent—that, my pet, is what the future has in reserve for us.

France. Let's hope it will keep its word with you more truly than you keep yours in regard to quitting Egypt. You lead this poor Egypt a pretty game. She is being pilfered right and left, without mentioning the senseless squandering of her finances.

John Bull (*protesting*). Squandering. The word is easily said.

France. And the fact more easily proved.

John Bull. I should like to see you do it.

FRANCE. Very well. Let us open the ledger containing a list of your depredations.

JOHN BULL. Depredations?

FRANCE. Depredations displeases you?

JOHN BULL. It annoys me.

FRANCE. Poor lamb, what a sensitive skin your conscience has! But, no matter!—you want figures? Here they are. First of all, here are £14,000 for the suppression of slavery—which no longer exists and which, for that matter, could not exist.

JOHN BULL. There have been cases——

FRANCE. Then the vigilance of your police and troops has been at fault. The slave trade can only be carried on by Kosseir or Upper Egypt. But you occupy Kosseir, and your soldiers at Wady Halfa cut off all communication between the Soudan and Egypt. If the army and gendarmery exercise sufficient watchfulness, they should be able to prevent the slave trade, and the budget is needlessly burdened with £14,000 for that purpose. This grant is similar to that made to the Royal Falconer in England.

JOHN BULL. And your Grand Master of the wolf-hunting train in France?

FRANCE. Oh? There are wolves in France.

JOHN BULL. So few!

FRANCE. Still, enough to give the semblance of a pretext for the appointment. But I imagine they no longer fly the falcon in England,

Let us continue our inquiry into your little Egyptian budget. First of all there is the maintenance of the Army of Occupation, £84,825. Police and Gendarmery, £218,258. The Suez Canal Police £10,000. Then, apart from the funds devoted to the so-called suppression of the slave trade and which pass to the secret political police, come quite a series of secret service outlays—Foreign Affairs, £300,000 Police £1,034, War £1,100. Then come fanciful items—£500 for the Zoological Gardens at Gizeh, where the only inmate thereabouts is the Director; £1000 for the improvement of the race of horses; £200 for the Sporting Club, £600 for pensions and trifles. And over and above all this as a bouquet, £34,500 for unforeseen expenses.

JOHN BULL (*very stiffly*). What

you term squandering, my dear friend, is nothing but a judicial outlay of Egyptian funds.

FRANCE (*ironically*). As in the affairs of the Kouffas, for example, concerning a certain Levantine. One of your financial advisers sanctioned an indemnity being paid to him of £87,000 in reference to a contract which had been broken by the said Levantine, notwithstanding that a judicial adviser of the Government had previously stated, after an elaborate inquiry into the matter, that he was entitled to £800, and that that would be behaving handsomely.

JOHN BULL (*in an easy manner*). A simple divergence of opinion, my dear, in the estimate of the injury caused. Nothing more. It is also an exceptional case, and I maintain that we make great sacrifices for Egypt.

FRANCE (*laughing*). With her money, which you distribute to English officers and civil functionaries.

JOHN BULL. But it is only owing to our clever management of the finances that we are able to bestow these bounties, as you qualify this just remuneration of our servants.

France. Pardon! Under the Control the finances were just as prosperous, only the surplus of the money, once the interest on the debt was paid, returned to the Egyptians instead of being distributed among foreigners.

John Bull. To the Pachas, Beys, and toad-eaters of the Khedive, but assuredly not to the fellaheen.

France. They, nevertheless, had a greater share than now, for they are more miserable than ever. To meet the outlay occasioned by the exorbitant emoluments of their present masters, it has been necessary to levy new taxes—that on tobacco among others, which is so heavy that the fellaheen have abandoned its cultivation. As to the article sold to them, it is so dear that many have been compelled to give up smoking.

John Bull. But tobacco is a luxury.

France. Luxury is often more necessary than utility: a cigarette has frequently given an empty stomach patience. On the other hand, to favour the railway administration, which is under your control, you have reduced the transport of goods by water to nothing, or next to nothing, through the tolls of

all sorts which you have established. But what is more astounding is that the expenses increase in proportion as what you call order is established. Thus, from 1890 to 1894 the famous platonic department for the suppression of slavery rises from £8,061 to £13,113; the central administration of Public Works jumps from £126,481 to £158,889; the gendarmery and police from £200,156 to £218,856; the outlay for the security of the frontier from £1,380 to £2,608; the War Department from £446,607 to £473,403. That is to say, the more the danger of war decreases, the more the expenses for the maintenance of the troops—whose number, nevertheless, remains the same—increases; the less the danger on the frontier, the more the sum devoted to its defence swells, which is the height of imbecility or ability, according to the view one takes of it. And I will not do you the injustice, my dear John Bull, to take you for a fool.

JOHN BULL. You are very good.

FRANCE (*continuing*). One would have thought, indeed, that the contrary would have happened, and that in proportion as the prosperity of the

country improved, the mechanism of the administration would have been simplified, whilst the expenses would have been cut down; but by reason of remarkable alterations performed under your intelligent direction, the contrary has been the result. And if the progression increases in the same proportion, it means bankruptcy with brief delay, and the demonstration by a simple equation of your notorious incapacity.

JOHN BULL (*downcast*). Oh! incapacity!

FRANCE (*continuing*). Or else the definite possession of Egypt, which would be a very good sample of your duplicity. I naturally leave aside the very unlikely hypothesis, for a fellow of your stamp, of the forcible evacution on account of bankruptcy, which would be at once stupid and shameless—and hold you in too great esteem, notwithstanding your prigging proclivites and your diplomatic tricks,—and have too much real friendship for you, notwithstanding the superficial abruptness of your manners,—to wish you such discomfiture.

JOHN BULL. That's very kind of you, my pet; and rest assured of the reciprocation of such sentiments on my

part; but, young mad-cap that you are—pardon me the expression—have we not assumed the heavy task of maintaining order in Egypt? Is is not right and our duty to take effectual measures to avert a danger that is always possible? *Si vis pacem*—you know the proverb—the Khalifa is not dead. He's doing what you are—collecting his thoughts.

FRANCE (*jeering*). And you, whilst he's collecting his thoughts—you collect from morning till night from Egypt's purse.

JOHN BULL. Oh! lightly—with the tips of my fingers only—solely for the purpose of defending her.

FRANCE (*laughing*). That is to say, you devour her substance for fear the Khalifa should get an indigestion from it. That's delicious! Your way of protecting your friends against thieves consists in stripping them yourself. It is at least original, and very annoying to the thieves who find themselves cheated, but also very ruinous for your friends.

JOHN BULL. Nevertheless, with your leave, my sweet dove, I have friends and excellent ones. Apart from Turkey who is shaky, America who is showing

a little temper, Germany who gives me the cold shoulder just now on account of the Boers, Austria who joins in chorus with her, Portugal who was sulking with me for a moment, I've a friend in Armenia, for whom I took up the cudgels.

FRANCE. And on whose back they are falling, beating her black and blue. You don't bring your friends luck.

JOHN BULL. Italy's very much attached to me.

FRANCE. So much the worse for her.

JOHN BULL. What do you mean? So much the worse!

FRANCE. Certainly! So much the worse! Far from withdrawing the words, I emphasise them. I bawl them out;—So much the worse! Germany's friendship for her was quite enough—it deprived her of legs and arms by imposing on her a leonine contract without a synallagmatic counterpart, forcing her to arm from head to foot against a neighbour who wished her no ill—to say nothing of the friendship of Austria, who treats her with supreme impertinence. There was no need for her to go astray to you.

JOHN BULL (*sadly*). Fancy saying

such, things, when it was I, so to say, who gave Italy Abyssinia!

FRANCE. *Timeo Danaos.* She should have remembered the proverb. A pretty present, too, you made her there: a thing that in no way belonged to you, any more than that waste ground in the Soudan; a nice piece of territory that you wished to share between Germany and yourself, and about which there was only one difficulty—namely, that it belonged to us.

JOHN BULL. (*endeavouring to excuse himself*). An error——

FRANCE. Why, you know you are an old customer at that sort of thing, you incorrigible land-grabber.

JOHN BULL. A simple geographical error, my child—a boundary line hardly indicated, a frontier vaguely traced out on the map.

FRANCE (*chaffing*). That didn't prevent you keeping all your wits about you, you beauty, or a bit of the cake remaining in your hands—and the best bit too!

JOHN BULL (*somewhat out of countenance*). Well? Chance——

FRANCE (*aggressively*). Chance? A chance long premeditated, prepared and

marvellously trained like those other chances of yours that are made to happen just at the right time, as with the Khalifa in Egypt. All your chances are *ejusdem farinæ*, my portly sir. The invitation to Italy to take a waltz in Abyssinia was one of those chances *à l'anglaise*, subtly contrived and beset with most elaborate pitfalls. It was a famous waltz you gave the poor thing there. Ah! you know the time of day, old boy, and when you invite somebody to jump into your boat, you do so with the coolness and self-possession of an able seaman.

JOHN BULL. But I did not precisely offer Abyssinia to . . . Italy.

FRANCE (*ironically*). Not in set terms, but only by implication. When you are not giving away what belongs to others, my virtuous friend, you offer what you have no need of. For example, in the division the Germans imposed on you or obtained from you in the vicinity of Zanzibar: as you were not able to take all you threw your grappling iron on the island of Zanzibar and abandoned to them the marshes on the mainland, keeping the meat and leaving them the bone, as you yourself say so wittily. In Damaraland, the only port in the

territory, and the only healthy spot—Walfish Bay—is yours. The remainder of the country, uninhabitable for Europeans, on account of the malarial fevers, has become the lot of unfortunate colonists sent out from Pomerania and Westphalia, who are dying there like flies. Then, when these wretched creatures decided to advance towards the north and east, and establish themselves in the fertile regions of Bechuanaland and the basin of the Zambesi—quick! a telegram was despatched to the Cape, and Cecil Rhodes, cutting the grass beneath their feet, went and planted the British flag in this coveted Canaan. That was showing little Christian charity to people of the same blood and religion. And indeed, from that time your dear kinsmen—it's thus you style them—have not had to be asked to acrimoniously relate in their newspapers what they think of the proceeding, qualifying it with opprobrious epithets which are far from parliamentary.

Formerly, Blucher, when being shown the Royal Exchange, the Bank of England, the Mint, and the accumulation of wealth concentrated in the City, could not help exclaiming, "What a splen-

did place to plunder!"—a thought thoroughly German, that came from the bottom of his heart.

Later on, Bismarck, who, in open parliament, complained ironically of receiving more papers from the British cabinet alone than from all the others in Europe put together, did not fear, after a drinking bout, if we may credit the legend, to hurl at England that insult, as infamous as it was ill-deserved: "England will one day astonish the world by her cowardice." And this man, this sinister butcher, crossed with an honest broker, who hates you with all his soul, who despises you to the last degree, who insults you as the merest lackey—you elevate him to the skies, exalting his genius and glorifying his smallest acts. That's pushing Christian humility a little bit too far, and a snap from the fangs of your lion, breaking the Teuton eagle's wing, would be more suitable than your inconceivable complacency.

The clumsy prank of the fellow Jameson was the last drop that sent the cup pouring over. For three days the German press, in a paroxysm of fury, inveighed against its insular kinsmen with exemplary virulence and acrimony.

The *Abendpost*, among other papers which distinguished themselves by their anglo-phobia, had the overwhelming conceit to term your noble feline animal an old poodle: "The British lion," it dared to write, "growls, but the miserable brute cannot bite. It's in the habit of making humble bows, as soon as it hears the crack of the whip." That was rather rough on the part of people of the same blood, with whom one has lived for centuries on terms of affectionate friendship.

JOHN BULL. A touch of jealousy—that's all. They will soon return to better sentiments.

FRANCE. Unless it be they who bring you to repentance; for if the tone of their newspapers is more than snappish, the terms of the telegraphic epistle addressed to the President of the Transvaal by the impetuous young man of Berlin are very significant.

JOHN BULL. A very badly brought-up boy—a fool——

FRANCE. Fools, particularly when crowned, are very dangerous. One never knows what whim may get into their head. And then you have played a good many scurvy tricks on Portugal,

in Africa, to do her out of Delagoa Bay and, if possible, of Mozambique. In pursuit of that object you even attempted a surprise a short time ago, after the style of that of the Chartered Company, but it was fortunately nipped in the bud. The Portuguese, who are very sharp, got wind of the thing, and you had your trouble for nothing. But these sons of the Cid are rancorous to excess, and, to give you tit for tat, might allow the Kaiser's soldiers to behave at Delagoa Bay as if they were at home and—you see the consequences at once.

It's sad to have to own it, my dear friend, but when a humourist said there was no spot left to you in the world where you could make a mistake, one can hardly avoid agreeing with him. You will have to alter your habits, my poor fellow, give up your bachelor life, settle down, make an end of it, as they say—resign yourself to the part of a retired old pirate. After all, one is obliged to be honest when one can't do otherwise.

JOHN BULL. You seem to be taking great care of my interests, my dear friend.

FRANCE. Coming from an old friend like me, it shouldn't surprise you.

JOHN BULL. I may have been in

error, but I've always acted conscientiously.

FRANCE. I believe you, and you were acting quite conscientiously that you stuck that madcap Italy in the mud. She bitterly regrets now having leant an ear to you.

JOHN BULL. I did not urge her on so much as all that ; and she's of an age to know how to behave herself.

FRANCE. Together with Massowah you gave her *carte blanche* in those regions, to obtain in exchange, and without loosening your purse-strings, the co-operation of her fleet in the Mediterranean, in the case of eventual complications, so as to maintain in conjunction with yours, the *status quo*—that is, your preponderance. You let fall the insinuation with incomparable sweetness, taking her on her weak point and patting her *amour propre*—for you are a famous coaxer, when you set about it, my old Celadon. Between the cheese and dessert, you expatiated in amazement on the lustre of her arms, the size of her cannon, the handsome appearance of her warriors. You were moved with pity at the wretchedness of the times which did not furnish her with the opportunity of dis-

playing these pretty things—of trying the range of her ordnance and testing the edge of her sabres. You hinted to her that this expedition would not be disagreeable to you. On the contrary, you let her vaguely imagine—imagine only!—that you would lend her a hand, and the giddy young thing, falling right into the trap, spent her last penny to go to Erythrea and farther, merely to get a licking from the Ras of Tigris and Shoa, and lose her prestige, stubbornly bent on a conquest in which the game is not worth the candle. Only yesterday, in an heroic combat of one against ten, the brave child has just paid nobly, with her blood, the price of her unlucky imprudence.

And after this catastrophe, England even refuses to permit Italian troops to land at Zeila, which is ours unless it be Egypt's; but which you consider yours.

John Bull (*embarrassed*). For fear of—diplomatic complications.

France. When you lead a friend into mischief, when you do it with your eyes open, it is incumbent on you to help him out of it, even though annoyances and some inconvenience should result.

And so, at last, Italy begins to see she is playing the part of dupe. The valiant defence of Galliano's *thousand* at Makaleh, teaches her to rely on herself, and to know how to do without alliances, which cost her dear and only bring her mortification.

JOHN BULL (*warmly*). She is entirely devoted to us, and her confidence in us is far from being shaken.

FRANCE. Such is not the opinion of the *Italia Militare*, which, writing on the morrow of this terrible blow said: "England for years has taken advantage of our policy, and only pays us with fine words."

JOHN BULL. Mere expressions!—the talk of journalists, and nothing more!

FRANCE. All your old friends, especially those of your own race, have, nevertheless, arrived at this same conclusion, you incorrigible old terror, that you are! and, one after the other, have shaken off your effusive expressions of friendship.

JOHN BULL. All through pure jealousy, or meaningless fits of sulkiness. Take Italy, for example. Is it my fault if she allowed herself to be surprised and crushed in an ambuscade? Can I do

anything? Besides, why did she undertake the business if she did not feel herself strong enough to bring it to a happy issue?

FRANCE. Why? Because the temptation was great; also because she relied a little on England's support.

JOHN BULL. I had bound myself to nothing.

FRANCE. In accordance with your praiseworthy custom—always the principle of elbow-room. An alliance is always somewhat inconvenient; one loses by it in liberty what one gains in strength. But she, the simple thing, had bound herself hand and foot. You see, my worthy friend, that one must think twice before allowing one's phalanges to be crushed in your vigorous grasp, although you offer your hand with such deplorable facility.

JOHN BULL. I only do so in good earnest.

FRANCE. I wouldn't like you to offer your friendship lightly; unfortunately you also often stifle legitimate scruples, and pass over matters touching your honour.

JOHN BULL (*huffily*). No one has ever given me offence with impunity,

and I have always been jealously careful of my honour.

FRANCE. Then how do you explain what is happening at this moment with regard to Germany? After having exhausted her vocabulary of unparliamentary epithets against you and abused you in the coarsest way, she has now the infernal cheek to endeavour to compel you to enter into her orbit in the character of a complaisant satellite, in order to plunder you abroad as at home, as the swarms of famished rats whom she lets loose annually on your island, pillage the city or fatten at Court. Now, after the deluge of ignominies vomited upon you by the reptiles of the press beyond the Rhine, whilst the trace of the Teutonic slap is still red on your face, a newspaper was to be found in England, and that one of the largest, to advocate an alliance with these cynical beggars. A Christ might have accepted such an affront, which would not have touched Him, with impunity, and have offered His left cheek after having been struck on His right; but when one is Great Britain and rules half the world; when one takes pride in the fact that the sun never sets on one's Empire;—one may

disdain the insult, but one should haughtily repel the advances of the insulter.

JOHN BULL. All England quivered at the affront and took up the challenge. We execrate Germany.

FRANCE. A compromise is already spoken of.

JOHN BULL. Germany seeks it, not we. We're manning the fleet, calling out the Militia, enrolling the Volunteers.

FRANCE. Notwithstanding that, you seem very much inclined to consider the semi-silence momentarily imposed on the reptiles of Berlin by their eccentric sovereign in the light of an excuse or an expression of regret, and I repeat that one of your newspapers, the one whose opinion is law, has already alluded to the possibility of a closer connection with a nation which, after having odiously vilified you, has the impudence to solicit your friendship, seeking only in its Judas-like kisses an opportunity to stifle you.

JOHN BULL (*crossly*). That paper is the only one.

FRANCE. It is the only one now; later on there will be others.

JOHN BULL. Others who will advocate an understanding with France. If

England's isolation weighs upon her and if she desires an ally, she will know which way to turn, and you may be quite sure it will not be in the direction of those hypocritical, short-sighted, foul-mouthed persons. If there is a Triple Alliance half dislocated, there are also Russia and France, two substantial and sturdy fellows, strongly united; and a third would perhaps be welcomed by them without over-much hesitation. They say, I know, in England that two are company and three none, but that's only true among small people, and we are not of that sort. That old rusty weather-cock at whose Germanophile propensities you were so rightly shocked and who is only the very humble servant of public opinion, was not able to feel the pulse this time. Having discovered its mistake, it now bears witness to the staunch firmness of the Franco-Russian alliance, at the same time as it points to its importance as a factor in general peace, and a necessary counterbalance to the Triple Alliance, and consequently the surest guarantee of the European equilibrium.

FRANCE. But to-morrow the weather-cock will have turned.

JOHN BULL. No, dear creature, for it will follow in the steps of public opinion, and opinion, once by mistake on the wrong scent, has found the right track now and is rapidly being confirmed in its freshly acquired and deliberately adopted tendency. Liberals, Conservatives, Radicals, all preach a closer connection with France. "During these last few days," says the *Daily Chronicle*, "the eyes of a great many of us have been opened to the impossibility and danger of that pronounced inclination towards the Triple Alliance which, not so long ago, led away the most short-sighted of our statesmen:" adding, "It is clear that the good old liberal policy of an *entente cordiale* with France has emerged again, as forming, immediately, after cordial relations with the United States, the basis of our Foreign policy." The *Daily News*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Birmingham Daily Post*, etc., abound in similar comments, and insist on this fact, that a closer understanding with you becomes imperative, and that immediate measures should be taken to effect it. Some even, confusing the desire with the reality, go so far as to advance that overtures have been made in that sense. Even Stanley, who

cannot be taxed with harbouring Francophile tendencies, pleads eloquently for this cause, expressing a hope to see spring up again that former friendship with France, whose democratic system of government approaches that of England as much as that of Germany differs from it. And these are not merely abstract generalities, platonic lucubrations, such as you may notice everywhere in your press, my dear friend. Even the manner of appreciating past and present acts, and the nature of the judgments delivered upon them, have undergone noteworthy modifications under the empire of this reversal of opinion, and much astonishment has been caused by these unexpected interpretations of history. For instance, you may have noticed in one of the Francophobe papers a new way of setting forth facts and establishing responsibilities in the preparation for and declaration of the war of 1870, corresponding point by point with the idea formed in your country—the only correct one, I hasten to say, from the point of view of historical criticism. And even certain idiosyncracies of German policy, until now carefully ignored, have been brought to light,

elucidated, and judged with pitiless severity.

You can very well see, my dear child, that the irresistible current which carries us towards you is not a mere instinctive movement or an ephemeral fancy, due only to the stress of circumstances, but the putting into execution of a decision reasoned out, wished for, and arrived at with a thorough knowledge of facts. We loyally offer you our friendship.

FRANCE. And from the bottom of my heart I should like to accept it, and in all loyalty also to give you mine. Only, my dear John Bull, your protestations of friendship, at which I feel deeply touched, come rather suddenly; your determination to split with those boors, who were so long your friends, has been arrived at a little bit offhand, in presence of a brusque disillusion, and has not, I am afraid, been weighed with absolute freedom of mind or a thorough knowledge of facts, as you are pleased to tell me. There is a bit of lover's spite displayed in your warm advances towards me, and had your offers, tempting as they may be, come—a little later, when once all this untimely effervescence had calmed down, they would have been met with

greater consideration and more cordiality, and—your dignity would have come out of it all the better. You have sinned a little by excess of zeal, my friend.

JOHN BULL. Believe me, my pet, the first impulse is always the right one, and you will not be long in perceiving it.

FRANCE. You always go beyond the mark, my dear John Bull. Now there's Russia, your newspapers are simply stifling with flowers—that very Russia for whom you formerly could not find terms sufficiently contemptuous, and whom you were always accusing of opposing your plans in everything and everywhere, and regarded as your worst enemy. You now suddenly discover that that nation, so vilified by you in past times, was abominably calumniated. Tears of repentance rise to your eyes, you feel yourself overwhelmed with love for the Cossacks, Russian leather and caviare. To those same Muscovites whom you for so long wished to keep out of the sunlight, Balfour now vows, in language really quite poetical, that he would be pleased to see them advance to the warm water of the sunny South.

The *Daily Telegraph* declares, with

delicious candour and touching emotion, that there is, and always has been, and that since the time of Queen Bess, mutual sympathy between the Slave and Anglo-Saxon, and that no cause for friction exists between them. In fact, the journal modestly concludes by suggesting that they are the two races who should divide the world.

Well! with your permission, this sudden sympathy sprung up in a night, like mushrooms after a downpour of rain; this century-old friendship unexpectedly unveiled without any oratorical precautions; this immoderate desire on your part to see the Russians taking a warm bath in the Southern seas; this staggering affirmation that Russian and English interest, far from clashing, fit one another like hand and glove; this astounding declaration that Russia should seize one half of the world and England the other—in a word, this unforeseen and odd expression of feeling; this grotesque avowal of principles brutally at variance with facts; these absurd affirmations;—at first slightly bewildered public opinion, and then provoked general hilarity throughout Europe. *Quos vult perdere Iupiter dementat!* You have been slightly

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off your head at this moment. You have made yourself rather ridiculous, my friend.

JOHN BULL. Bah! Ridicule runs off me like water from a duck's back, and, ridiculous or not, I represent a force with which it is necessary to count. We three together—Russia, you and I—command the world. Nothing moves without your permission. Our will is law, *dura lex, sed lex.*

FRANCE. Yes, with we three together, difficulties would be smoothed down, wrongs redressed, and the peace of the world assured; but we should require proofs of your sincerity, my friend.

JOHN BULL. Proofs! . . . But did Russia give you any proofs? Apart from playing the Marseillaise at Cronstadt on board her fleet and receiving you with marked and interested regard, a reception which for that matter you returned with usury at Toulon, I cannot see that up to now she has rendered you much service, save that of accepting your money and making use of your political influence in the far East.

FRANCE. If we have heartily opened our purse to her and have supported her with all our power when we have been

able, we have only discharged a debt of honour, and responded to one good turn by another. We were alone, she came to us ; we had no friends, she held out her hand to us, having already, after 1870, saved our lives, when the German reiters, furious at seeing France was not done to death, wanted to rush on to her and settle us ; and that we shall never forget. Nevertheless, we had fought against her in the Crimea, to cement our cordial understanding with you. And you in 1870, forgetting the services rendered, the blood spilt, side by side, on the same battle-fields—you did not raise a finger to prevent our being crushed, confining your benevolent neutrality to sending us barrels of hams and tinned meat. That was no doubt very honest on your part ; but a few regiments of your gallant troops arriving at the critical moment, or an energetic attitude at the time peace was signed, would probably have changed the turn of events or have prevented the mutilation of France.

Italy, also, who owes her existence to us—she let us slide, showing us manifestly that she did not care a fig about her companions in arms at Solferino and Magenta. She flirts shamefully, the

pretty signorita, the ungrateful and inconstant friend, with those spectacled drunkards, who ruin and disregard her, notwithstanding the senseless affection she shows them.

And all this, my dear John Bull, gives me matter for reflection. Once bit, twice shy, and we have been badly bitten —sufficiently so for us to remember and be more prudent in the future— to take precautions, and, when placing trust in another, to do it only with most scrupulous circumspection.

JOHN BULL. We, however, have not bothered you too much.

FRANCE. You more than the others, my amiable friend, in spite of your touching protestations of devotedness, the result of the painful evidence of your complete isolation and the hatred felt for you by Europe, who is exasperated at your innumerable pilferings, your insatiable ambition and cannibal manners, acquired by contact with those savages of all sorts with whom you are always at loggerheads. You always, at every European Conference, consider yourself presiding at a palaver in some part or other of the Dark Continent. I appreciate, as it deserves, your passing and,

whatever you may say, very unstable fancy for a closer intimacy; but before coming to a decision I intend examining at leisure what your sudden act of contrition is worth. Everywhere; on the Congo, on the Mekong, on the Niger, on the Upper Nile, we have encountered systematic ill-will, not only from the Government, but also from English opinion; and I should like to see this right-about-face movement in your sentiments express itself more seriously than by words. I should prefer facts.

JOHN BULL. The difficulty between us on the Upper Mekong is settled. There are facts.

FRANCE. Speak in the singular, my friend. A fact.

JOHN BULL (*good-naturedly*). Bah! The conversation will continue in the plural.

FRANCE. I hope so, for there are other cases of the same kind in abeyance on the Niger, on the Congo, in Egypt.

JOHN BULL. All that is being arranged, and will soon be settled.

FRANCE. Such is not the opinion of the City weather-cock, which says very distinctly that the part England is performing in Egypt is not nearly at an

end, in the same way as Cecil Rhodes pompously declares that his in South Africa has only just commenced.

JOHN BULL (*very disdainfully*). The City weather-cock! Do you attach any importance to the senile nonsense of that old gossip who has outlived herself and who has lost with age the only faculty she ever possessed—that of knowing how to strike the note of public feeling?

As to that noisy Napoleon of Africa, he would do much better, since his piteous *fiasco*, to place a damper on his Rhodesianesque jokes, and endeavour to let his past pranks be forgotten instead of holding out the promise of others in the future. If he did not know how to keep within bounds, let him at least know how to keep silent, in his own interest and in that of his worthy Chartered Company, which, if it persists in making a row, may be snuffed out more easily than it imagines.

The first step towards the settlement of all these irritating questions which divide us, has been taken, and that was the most difficult. Their solution without delay is imperative. A little more patience, my dear friend. And remember that all's well that ends well.

FRANCE. Yes, but waiting is painful and outrageous when it is too prolonged, and one's rights are carelessly deferred. It is wrong to keep friends dancing attendance on one indefinitely.

Nevertheless, it is still something to perceive the new, and this time logical orientation of your policy, becoming more defined amidst the entanglements of your hesitation, and to follow the curious phases of this surprising evolution, hastening the laboriously prepared birth of an *entente cordiale*. All my hopes go to this new-born babe who, I hope, will be the connecting link between two grand and noble nations, concealing beneath an apparent incompatibility of temper, sincere esteem for one another, and a friendship smouldering beneath the ashes of services mutually rendered and only requiring an opportunity to be fanned into flame. This opportunity our inveterate enemies, who are now also yours, have just supplied. For the first time in their lives, and quite in spite of themselves, they have rendered us a service. One piece of advice only, whilst it is still time. A word or two on your Army and your Navy, which appear to me to be in a far from satisfactory state.

JOHN BULL. The Army perhaps; but our Navy !——

FRANCE. Both. Let us begin with the Army. Both your mounted and field artillery are defective. You have already recognised the bad state of your material and munitions of war, and endeavoured to remedy it. Your Volunteers could assuredly form a corps of excellent troops if they were properly armed and equipped, but their rifles are of a different type to those of the Regular Army, and in war-time this would necessitate the use of two kinds of cartridges, giving rise to a series of inconveniences of all sorts. Their Army Service Corps is incomplete, and your Militia has none.

JOHN BULL. I know that in regard to that there is much to say; but it is not the same with our Navy.

FRANCE. That is not the view of competent persons. You still have on your ironclads and large cruisers—even on those ranked in the first class—some muzzle-loading guns.

JOHN BULL. Oh! an insignificant quantity, and only to increase the number, we keep them merely as curiosities, old *bric à brac*.

FRANCE. Playing the part of wall flowers at a dance, no doubt: but the deck of a vessel is not a ball-room, it's an arena; there is only room for arms and combatants, and useless mouths are expelled from it.

JOHN BULL. That is what would be done in war-time.

FRANCE. It is true that you would lay down in the building yards, and complete, an almost unlimited number of vessels in a relatively short period, but it takes at least three times as long to perfect the education of a simple lieutenant as to build, arm, and equip a vessel.

JOHN BULL. We have more naval officers than we want out of employment, and ready to take service at once.

FRANCE. Well, then, hasten to accept their services, for fear they should change their minds.

Your Admiralty stated a few years ago, that your Navy was everything that could be desired, and was ready to respond to all that might be required of her. Six months later they were obliged to confess to Parliament that such was not the case by a long way. It was the same with the Army. It required con-

siderable pressure from public opinion, aroused by the alarming revelations of Lord Charles Beresford, one of the most clear-sighted men of the United Kingdom, and a few other competent persons, to recall the respective heads of the War and Navy Departments to a sense of their responsibility in regard to the defence of the country, and to compel them to take the initiative of certain measures to place the two forces of the country on a footing more suitable to modern exigencies.

Thus, my friend, your Army, already so small, is in a state of marked inferiority, as regards weapons, to those of other Powers. Your regiments of Volunteers, badly armed, imperfectly equipped and disciplined, almost unprovided with military trains, would, in the event of war, be reduced to a state of forced inaction, and consequently would be almost useless. Your Militia is in a similar condition.

Your Navy, which Europe should take as a model, is still reduced partly to the use of guns of the old system, and in other respects it leaves much to be desired. But your Navy is your safeguard. You cannot sustain a naval

defeat—your prestige as first naval Power would receive a mortal blow. Even if your fleet does number more ships than each of the other Powers taken alone—if it be the most numerous, in fact—it is not the best organised ; it does not respond, as it should, to the requirements of the moment, to the necessities of the hour. If, in two years, you can double your total of vessels, it will require ten years to fill up the officers' lists and form the crews properly.

The heroic age of Nelson and Napoleon is passed. Warfare on land or at sea is no longer an art in which the unforeseen and the audacious play a preponderating part ; it is a science. A battle is no longer a struggle in the lists, where the muscles of valiant champions, and the presence of mind of their chiefs, were exercised ; it is now a redoubtable problem, which is resolved mathematically with very complicated appliances—murderous engines, the knowledge and working of which require years of very assiduous study.

JOHN BULL (*astounded*). But all that you're saying, my friend, is absurdly exaggerated, to say no more.

FRANCE. Then the responsibility

falls on one of your newspapers, the *Daily Chronicle*. I have merely been quoting the remarks in its issue of January 17th, 1896, if you wish me to be specific.

JOHN BULL. One paper amongst a thousand!

FRANCE. Not at all! Here's another which corroborates what the former advances. I quote its words:

"According to a minute addressed to the Admiralty, all the torpedo boats, with the exception of one, which were sent on trial trips between the 5th and 15th inst. and which should have accompanied the Flying and Channel Squadrons, have been found so defective that it has been necessary to send them back to dock."

It appears that this minute also pointed out that, in the event of complications arising, England would not be able to send her entire fleet to sea, owing to her not possessing the requisite number of sailors, or of men sufficiently exercised in artillery drill. It is certainly desirable that the naval authorities should have more men and officers at their disposal.

In the wars of former days England always had a large reserve in case of need, which gave her a marked advantage

over her rivals. If hostilities happened unfortunately to break out again, the want of sailors possessing a thorough knowledge of their calling might, at a critical moment, have the most disastrous consequences and we must not lose sight of the fact that, in this respect at least, the French Navy, to quote only one example, is well provided. This newspaper sets forth what I have just told you in other terms. You see I have in no way exaggerated.

JOHN BULL. Oh! hang those papers!

FRANCE. Don't abuse them, but thank them rather for having, by enlightening public opinion, contributed to the improvements recently introduced in the War Office and Admiralty. Be reassured, my friend! Nothing is lost so far, although the danger is imminent, as your press begins to perceive. They have the intuition that the country is on the eve of being compelled to face grave difficulties and, like vigilant sentinels, place the bugle of alarm to their lips.

I take them at haphazard. Here is what one of your journals declares—the one that is said to have the largest circulation in the world :

"The country has put aside for the present the old questions of internal policy, and has recognised the immense gravity of events abroad, to follow on that ground with zeal and admiration the spirited policy of Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury.

"Say what one will, the wisest do not know, and cannot know, what the present year has in store for England.

"What we take note of is, that in view of material interests, the old bonds of customs and sympathies uniting nations together, show a dangerous tendency to disappear. Consanguinity did not prevent a President of the United States threatening Great Britain with war. Community of religion, and of royal and European political descent, did not prevent a German Emperor causing all possible injury to English colonial interests.

"This and other things have shown us that, in our days, one cannot rely on justice, common-sense, or sentiment. Only the man who is strong and well armed can preserve his house; and England, superbly isolated, must arrange for her isolation to be her strength.

"It is a very nice thing to keep apart

from a Triple or Quadruple Alliance, but only so long as a nation has the power and the will to be sufficient to herself.

"There are two alternatives: England must be powerful enough at sea to resist any possible combination of ambitious Powers against her, or she must be a partner in the continental game, and play the difficult and dangerous part of an ally."

There are many other papers which lose their heads amidst the disconcerting entanglement of all these sudden complications, these inexplicable marches and counter-marches of events. They launch into speculations and political conjecture with a hardihood of conception and a fertility of imagination that would put to shame the most extravagant among the weavers of novels of adventure. They affirm—the *Pall Mall Gazette* amongst others — with imperturbable assurance and unblushing candour, that the famous Flying Squadron, that future pulveriser of the navies of Europe and the rest of the world, will accomplish marvellous feats of prowess, With the co-operation of three American squadrons, this extraordinary

fleet will force the Dardanelles, whether Europe likes it or not, show the Sultan that he has absolutely fallen into second childhood and that a judiciary council—Anglo-American or Saxon—is going to compel him to pension off the Armenians who escaped from the butchery carried out by his orders, and to bring Russia back to a better state of mind.

Other papers, on the contrary, believe that the mission of the Flying Squadron is to crush in the egg the Navy of the United States, whose unanimous vote of 175,000,000 francs for the improvement and extension of their coast defences constitute, in the opinion of these journals, a danger to England.

Profound politicians, on another side, pretend they see in this great Anglo-Saxon Armada, which has so ridiculously monopolised public interest, a menace against France, who, in view of such an eventuality, has given orders to fortify her coasts and immediately mobilise all her naval forces.

In fact, there is no hypothesis, more or less sanguinary or improbable, that has not been put forward by your press. It is true, however, that these daily jokes are limited to certain organs, and

that your press, as a whole, takes a correct view of the crisis.

JOHN BULL. We are better prepared and more formidable than you think.

FRANCE. I wish I could share your confidence, but I am under the impression that you are slightly deceived as to your own strength. You have slept on your laurels and have spoilt your hand in your Stone Age-like struggles with your savages of all sorts. Your brusque awakening to reality was the painful perception of your inferiority to redoubtable and threatening adversaries.

European peace is on the point of being upset. A wind of folly and war is passing over the world, breaking resistance with the might of its breath, disconcerting the reason, paralysing the goodwill and common-sense of nations: a terrible hurricane, in which the intermittent and sudden spells of calm are merely lulls, during which the gale gains fresh strength to speed the work of destruction.

In this formidable maelstrom, which carries along men and things in the irresistible movement of its vertiginous spirals, the political ideas of old ages whirl round bewildered, approaching nearer,

every minute, to the bottom of the fathomless deep. Treaties consecrated by time or by the force of circumstances are torn up in a few hours, and new and unexpected groupings are suddenly formed. Understandings are arrived at and upset; ancient friendships of brotherly peoples are forgotten, in the stress of other necessities; factors formerly ignored are brought into line; unforeseen complications arise; and in the clash of these new elements and the shock caused by the downfall of the past, the worm-eaten edifice of European equilibrium is tottering with sinister sounds.

Every power, with feverish diligence, has chosen allies, or had them forced upon her at the last moment. Every nation has got ready her arms and taken up her post for the combat. The armies of Europe, drawn up in line of battle, and waiting for the word of command, stand anxiously with their fingers on the triggers, expecting the signal to rush upon one another and consummate the grand butchery, the infamous sacrifice of blood.

You are, believe me, on the eve of a terrible crisis, the forerunners of which have surprised you like a clap of thunder in a clear sky, and in which the power of

England may disappear unless you are extremely prudent.

JOHN BULL. That crisis threatens you also!

FRANCE. Us like the others; but we are on our guard, whereas you are not ready, even at a moment when throughout Europe the cry resounds "Draw swords!"

If you wish to live, you must immediately make a clean sweep of all your old naval and military methods, create a new army from head to tail, and equip it once for all, and reorganise and double your fleet—a task that will take you ten years. Until then, *faites le mort*!

Russia has been reflecting for forty years. Thrice she has issued from this masterly inactivity: once to declare war against Turkey and wrest Bulgaria from her; another time to conclude an alliance with us; and recently to make Turkey her vassal, by assuming the obligation to defend her against all comers. For five-and-twenty years we have been doing like Russia. Follow this example, prepare and concentrate your forces, and carefully avoid any premature quarrel that might interfere with the continuous, regular movement of your work of renovation. Your existence as a nation

is at stake, and your existence is necessary as a factor in civilisation. The effacement of England, or even its too great curtailment, would be a calamity for the world and for us, a sensible and irreparable loss. Wait !

JOHN BULL. But our colonies—you don't give a thought to them. For us they are a precious resource, a storehouse of inexhaustible strength. At the first appeal from the Mother Country they would send us their contingents. It is impossible that a blow can be struck or a chord sounded in even the most distant part of that Empire—that great mother Empire, standing so splendidly isolated—without an echo coming back from every other part. This is the proof that British hearts beat in unison throughout the world, whatever may be the difference that separates us :

> "Britain's myriad voices call:
> 'Sons be wedded each and all
> Into one Imperial whole,
> One with Britain heart and soul.
> One fleet, one throne,
> Britons, hold your own!'"

FRANCE. Poor John Bull. How simple you are ! But your colonies will

be your greatest encumbrance in case of war.

JOHN BULL. An encumbrance?

FRANCE. And a most serious one. It is you who will have to defend them, and not they who will come to your assistance. They are a cause of weakness to you, for they compel you to scatter your forces to protect them.

In the same way your innumerable merchant fleet would be your ruin. If your merchant ships quit your ports, squadrons will be necessary to protect them, if you don't wish them to fall into the hands of the enemy's privateers. For that purpose you will require a fleet much superior to the one you have. That will necessitate such an outlay that your budget will soon show a deficit, and the commercial profit derived from the sale of the cargoes of the vessels thus convoyed, will be like a drop in the ocean beside the sacrifice of cash their protection will have occasioned. I put aside the hypothesis of an encounter unfavourable to you.

If your merchant ships risk leaving your ports without an escort, the greater number of them fall into the wolf's jaws, and run every risk of being sunk or

captured by the enemy or blocked in foreign ports, if they have time to take refuge there. If they remain in your docks, your commerce is annihilated and the losses will total up to milliards.

And that is what it is to be wealthy, my friend.

Thus good-bye to that lovely dream of agglomeration into a compact whole of the Anglo-Saxon race distributed in different parts of the globe—that chimera so dearly caressed of a vast and solitary colonial empire. It is an interesting Utopia, but still a Utopia.

The colonies, which cost us money and also give us a return, are nations in an embryonic state. The gestation proceeds slowly, and terminates without much heartrending. The suckling, fondled and spoiled, overflows with affection for that excellent Mamma beyond the ocean, so long as he is at the breast. But as soon as the little man is able to put one foot before the other,—to lisp a word,—has tried, by breaking a toy, the power of his tiny muscles,—the sweet young rascal ceases to cajole his wet-nurse, when he does not scratch her breast. As a youth he detests and fears her, but makes use of her and takes

advantage of her. Arrived at man's estate he makes her feel that her advice displeases him and that he cannot bear her presence, and only waits till he knows the full measure of his strength in order to emancipate himself completely. Then, as soon as he has a few hairs on his chin, the amiable gentleman takes the high hand; he will have nothing in common with the Mother Country, who must be esteemed fortunate if this little monster of ingratitude, born of her loins, does not seize her by the throat. That is what happens always and what has always happened. And your colonies are beginning to have hair on their chin, my dear John Bull.

A last piece of advice. Along your coast you have a population of more than a hundred thousand fishermen—rough fellows with good heads and sound stomachs, sailors from top to toe by habit and heredity for centuries. Make those seafaring men do two or three years' service on your battle-ships—compel them, moreover, to respond to your first call in case of urgency.

JOHN BULL. Something like your "Naval conscription"?

FRANCE. About the same. You

will then have constantly within arm's reach a matchless reserve wherewith to fill up the gaps made in your crews in the days of misfortune.

The superior posts in the Army and Navy are relatively inaccessible to those disinherited by fortune, and your corps of officers forms a closed caste, so to say. Throw the gates wide open ; accept talent, no matter whence it comes, from what social strata it issues ; and your commissions will be held by men of real value, by energetic beings with unbending wills, instead of being encumbered, as they too often are, by flabby titled mediocrities, alike compromising and costly.

Just think that every day, wretches endowed with genius, unable to place it at the disposal of their country, die of despair at seeing themselves unappreciated, or employ those innate gifts in nefarious practices or criminal enterprises ! This is lost strength, when it is not a danger, and your duty, and interest also, is to seek out that strength, discipline it and use it for the greatness of your country. Give these latent glories a chance to display themselves. When in a position to develop, they will one day become the pride of England, instead of

being its scum and an internal danger. One should not waste treasures of this sort, when one has the advantage of possessing them.

JOHN BULL (*pleasantly*). But you, my sweet, who at times reckon me up so nicely and at others make me professions of friendship, even of esteem, with which I am very much touched—you leave me very perplexed as to the nature of your feelings towards me. Are you chaffing, or must I take what you say seriously?

FRANCE (*gaily*). Oh! between us two, my chum, it's another pair of shoes: we like each other and detest each other at one and the same time, like dog and cat in the same house, who finish by becoming attached to one another and unable to part. They exchange, it is true, from time to time a scratch here, a bite there, in front of the common platter, particularly when the rations are meagre; they mutually snatch a bone, a bit of bacon rind, the leavings at meals from one another; they growl, spit; one swears in minor, the other barks in major; but the duet always ends by accord. Doggy is aware that pussy has sharp claws, and pussy knows by ex-

perience that doggy has sound teeth. They tried each other for a long while, like accomplished duellists; each time both have been ready for the parry and thrust, with bunches of fur torn away, and the skin somewhat damaged. Then, tired of war, they concluded a truce, which threatens to be eternal, like your stay in Egypt, my old friend.

In the meanwhile, they have rendered one another mutual services. Doggy has broken the back of some ugly Toms who wanted to have too much of their own way with Pussy; Pussy, on her side has more or less blinded certain interlopers of the canine tribe, who persisted in considering Doggy a raw steak, suitable to their voracity.

By the fact of this reciprocity of good relations, antinomies of all sorts have been conciliated, antipathy of race has melted into a certain sympathy, which is a mixture of well-considered sentiment and interest; and between these two beings, who could not bear each other, has been formed a cordial understanding, if not an unalterable friendship. And as each had his comfortable kennel, a luxuriant mess of victuals; as there was no envy between them really worth troub-

ling about, and a great deal to gain from others by their mutual agreement, the result has been that they can no longer do without one another.

If occasional quarrels or skin-deep disputes, emphasised by an unexpected bite, an involuntary scratch, rancours of former days ill-digested, and all at once coming up again, sometimes trouble this serenity, they are but accidents, tricks of atavism. They only show themselves in the form of inoffensive whims, malicious rather than vindictive, appeased as soon as they spring up, and of no consequence whatever. In fact, the good creatures squabble for the pleasure of making it up again. And that's our way of liking each other, my fat John Bull.

JOHN BULL (*expansively*). Well! Honour bright, my pussy—for I'm the bull-dog, am I not!—you are fully in the right, and it would break my heart to split with you. But all the same, my pretty gossip, you've got the gift of the gab, and you don't mince matters when you've your knife in any one. You reckon up your old friend in fine style.

FRANCE (*smiling*). *Qui bene amat bene castigat.*

JOHN BULL. Yes, I know, and you

must love me awfully, to judge from your manner of correcting me.

But in regard to Egypt: you really suppose; you think that—what shall I say?—that I'm not frank; that I'm fishing in troubled waters, or something of that sort?

FRANCE (*good-humouredly*). You do nothing else, you artful dodger; you're up to the neck in troubled waters; you're swimming and diving there. Come now, between us two, do you think it's the way to educate or accustom a people to govern themselves, acting as you are doing with those wretched fellows?

JOHN BULL (*sulkily*). To hear you, any one would think we were skinning them alive. I must be a regular vampire, the counterpart of an Attila, or an eleventh plague in Egypt.

FRANCE. Well, something of that sort. But look here! while I'm about it, I'll tell you plainly all I've got on my mind, and what I think of your little games.

Under the pretence of accustoming Egypt to self-government, you are absolutely unaccustoming it. You administer it solely by Englishmen; you reduce the Khedive to the passive and not very

honourable part of a subservient Rajah in tutelage ; you transform the Assembly of Notables into a gathering of hypnotised lay-figures, obedient to your every nod. As to the remaining small native functionaries, the small fry—*oust !* Clear out ! Their posts are bestowed on a lot of little clerks, forwarded first-class from London, carriage paid, insured in case of accident, and to these encumbering nincumpoops, who would barely have earned their living in England, salaries are given quite out of proportion to the resources of the country.

JOHN BULL. We have kept Frenchmen in the Administration, if you please.

FRANCE. Out of decency ; and how many ?

JOHN BULL. Two for every five Englishmen ; and that's something.

FRANCE (*ironically*). While waiting for that something to be nothing—and it won't be long, judging from the rate at which you're going—you utterly ignore the wishes of the inhabitants, transform to your own ends the institutions of the country ; you ruin the principle of the authority of the sovereign, who must be nothing but the humble servant of Lord

Cromer; you destroy the prestige of the Ministers, of whom you make lackeys; you dismiss the functionaries of the country, or saddle the few you keep with an English overseer, his master and spy; you give the sack to the foreign clerks. And you term that the political education of the people—their apprenticeship to self-government? That, in plain French and English too, if you will allow me, is emasculating a people; it is political enthralment. You know that as well as I do, you beauty, but you take jolly good care not to own it.

JOHN BULL (*somewhat dumbfounded*). But what would you have done in my place?

FRANCE. What would we have done? Instead of proving at every moment to the Khedive that his authority was nil, we would have assisted him in winning the respect of his subjects, accustoming him to exercise command, whilst sharing it with him. By discreet supervision and assisting them with our advice, we would have facilitated the conduct of affairs by the Notables; have kept, instead of expelling, the native clerks, and have directed them in the

performance of their duties. We would have appointed Egyptian officers to some of the higher posts in the Army. While thus patiently initiating these great children into the things of Europe, their apprenticeship to self-government would have been, little by little, completed ; the Khedive would have been obeyed, the Notables respected, and the clerks treated with consideration. The Army, reorganised with native elements, would have been able to work alone when once left to itself, and, the expenditure being largely diminished, there would have been a possibility of lightening the burden of the fellaheen. The machine, once set up, would have worked as on wheels, and the prosperity of the country——

JOHN BULL (*interrupting her and continuing her phrase in a bantering tone*). ——Would have increased more and more, as in the fairy tales. The programme's perfect.

FRANCE (*with conviction*). But certainly.

JOHN BULL (*sceptically*). You see the bright side of everything, my dear.

FRANCE. I've good eyes, that's all.

JOHN BULL (*gallantly*). Fine eyes anyhow.

FRANCE (*with emphasis*). That is what *we* would have done, and what you should have done, instead of seeking by all possible and imaginable means to dislocate the native Government and, as a result, make an English Government necessary.

JOHN BULL (*protesting*). Dislocate! But the native Government is a marvellous instrument.

FRANCE (*rectifying*). Anglo-native.

JOHN BULL. Anglo, if you like. (*Continuing.*)——a most valuable instrument.

FRANCE (*ironically*). A most valuable one, which you use to perfection.

JOHN BULL. And as to Egypt, she has never been better. She enjoys a plethora of health.

FRANCE. Oh! as to that, yes; it's killing her. One could not define her position more perfectly; and if this state of health continues a little longer, she will not go far with you, who are not in the habit of spinning matters out.

JOHN BULL. Oh, if you're going to make fun of the thing——

FRANCE. Can the commonplace rot you're talking about Egypt's health be for a moment taken seriously, my poor friend? Egypt, I repeat, is lost if she remain any longer in your hands. Your *protegée* is shaky on the legs, worn out and sick to death.

JOHN BULL (*bantering*). And you'd like to attend to her.

FRANCE (*with pity*). Well, you are so awkward and the patient's case is so serious, that I might be tempted to.

JOHN BULL (*with his head in the air*). If you had hold of the handle of the frying-pan, my Princess, you'd talk quite differently.

FRANCE (*maliciously*). Shall I take it?

JOHN BULL. No thanks. I know it would be in good hands, for you are a first-rate *cordon bleu*. (FRANCE *bows*). But——

FRANCE (*interrupting him and completing his thought*).——You would be afraid I should not let go of it again.

JOHN BULL. H'm! I've great confidence in you——

FRANCE (*interrupting him again and continuing his remark*).——But only to a certain point, eh!

JOHN BULL. I acknowledge it, if I must be frank with you.

FRANCE. You couldn't be more so.

JOHN BULL (*continuing*). And you're such a self-willed little party, so (*hesitating*) headstrong—forgive the expression——

FRANCE (*laughing*). Go on.

JOHN BULL.——that if ever I were guilty of such a foolish thing, I'm very much afraid I should bite my nails off. Such a good cook as yourself could never make up her mind to hand me back the frying-pan. It would be folly to think so.

FRANCE (*convinced*). But then, you cook so badly!

JOHN BULL (*nettled*). That's possible, but I like my cooking, and my stomach is accustomed to and appreciates it.

FRANCE. Notwithstanding your stomach, fatty, I'll move heaven and earth to give the frying-pan back to Egypt. It's hers by right.

JOHN BULL. And you will no doubt teach her how to use it.

FRANCE. She won't require a teacher. She'll make the stew she likes according to her own taste. She likes her style of cooking as you like yours. She can do

without lessons, particularly such as yours ; they are too costly, any way.

JOHN BULL (*with spirit*). I will admit all that for the moment. I govern like a fool or a knave—which you will. I draggle along in Egyptian finance with an inaptitude that beggars description or else with blamable perspicacity—for there is no other alternative in face of the situation, which you do not hesitate to qualify as monstrous.

FRANCE. Monstrous ! I did not go so far as that.

JOHN BULL. Very nearly. According to you, I am engaged in assassinating Egypt—in bleeding her, like a simple Yorkshire porker, in order to make sausages and hams out of her.

FRANCE (*slyly*). In a word, to cook your own bacon.

JOHN BULL. To cook my bacon, if you like. Is not that something monstrous ?

FRANCE. Absolutely ! And you at last see the position in its real light. I didn't think you had so much (*hesitating*) common-sense.

JOHN BULL. Why not tell me at once that I'm a jackass, while you're about it ?

FRANCE. Because it would not be polite ; but if you insist——

JOHN BULL. Not that I'd care if you did ; but if it would please *you*——

FRANCE. You are quite *régencé*, my dear fellow.

JOHN BULL (*in a self-satisfied way*). I always had that idea, and you only confirm my suspicions.

FRANCE. You seem to have a pretty good opinion of yourself, my friend.

JOHN BULL. I appreciate myself at my true value, my dear, that's all. Then, in face of this position, duly qualified as monstrous, you leave me no alternative except that of being a fool or a knave. I deserve either to be brought up at Bow Street or to be sent to Bedlam ; it's impossible to get out of the dilemma. I shove this poor Khedive about ; I outrageously maltreat the Notables ; I've made a cardboard Army; I shower affronts on the native functionaries ; it's my fault if the fellaheen get into a tighter fix every day. My speciality is to make blunders, and the number of them is already incalculable. That's understood.

FRANCE. And palpable.

JOHN BULL. Palpable if you like! But do you think me so ingenuous——?

FRANCE (*interrupting him*). Oh! as to that, no!

JOHN BULL (*continuing*)——so devoid of staying powers and common-sense as to abandon Egypt after having watered it with our blood, repulsed the Mahdi, restored the finances, organised the Army, created new industrial enterprises, founded factories, revived commerce, erected palaces, and, in a word, transformed Egypt into a land of milk and honey.

FRANCE. For the English.

JOHN BULL. Assuredly not for the Pope of Rome.

FRANCE (*very quietly*). Well! All that you have been enumerating, my grand old man, was done before you, by us—and better than by you; and yet we left Egypt.

JOHN BULL. By force.

FRANCE. As you will be obliged to do, unless you knuckle under. We also, my good John Bull—we have shed our blood in Egypt.

JOHN BULL. So long ago!

FRANCE. That has nothing to do with the fact. However, I will not go

back to the Deluge, or even to the Crusades, notwithstanding that Saint Louis left a sufficiently respectable list of French corpses at Damietta. I will speak of more recent times—of the Bonaparte period.

JOHN BULL. That's already forgotten.

FRANCE. Not by us at any rate, and I'm going to refresh your memory on the subject. It will be of use to you.

JOHN BULL. I'm all attention, my angel!

FRANCE. If in 1882, after having bombarded Alexandria, you entered the city shouldering arms as if on parade, we took it by assault in 1799, and the names of the soldiers who fell on the field of honour are inscribed on the pedestal of Pompey's Pillar.

JOHN BULL. *Nomina stultorum*——

FRANCE (*nettled, interrupting him*). They were intoxicated with glory, Mr. John Bull, and the list of those names is a page of history, and not a mere collection of letters bearing witness to the self-conceit of some departed worthy who insisted on leaving to posterity the unequivocal proofs of his own absolute insignificance.

JOHN BULL. Don't get angry, my

beauty. I spoke without any evil intention. These stereotyped phrases crop up against one's will. And rest assured that I admire bravery, wherever it may be found.

FRANCE. Well, then, I am about to furnish you with an opportunity to admire it. Attend to me. I'll not keep you long. If at Kafr-Dawar and Tel el Kebir you dispersed a few battalions of demoralised rebels, Bonaparte at the Pyramids, notwithstanding the numerical inferiority of his troops, annihilated the Mameluks, quite a different lot of rascals from your fellaheen, and commanded by Mourad Bey, a fellow of a different stamp to your addle-pated Arabi.

JOHN BULL (*jocularly*). Yes, my pet; but remember that forty centuries and more were looking down upon Bonaparte, from the height of those Pyramids; and when a man feels himself being watched, particularly by centuries, he accomplishes prodigies.

FRANCE. Which he did. Desaix, on his side, with a handful of men, captured off-hand, after a series of engagements, the Fayoum, Upper Egypt and Kosseir, planting the flag of the Republic before you at Philæ, and perpetuating,

by an inscription for ever memorable, the souvenir of the French expedition.

JOHN BULL. I read it, Madame, bareheaded.

FRANCE (*affected*). That was very good of you, John Bull.

JOHN BULL. But any man who has not a stone for a heart would have done the same, my dear child.

FRANCE (*continuing*). Later on, Kleber, with ten thousand men, put to flight eighty thousand Turks whom you had nastily set on to us.

JOHN BULL (*in honied accents*). You forget to mention the revolt at Cairo, my young giddy-pate, and, considering the stubborn animosity of both parties in the struggle, one can only conclude that when it was suppressed, the Egyptians, who dislike us, were not particularly fond of you, and that you, on your side, did not use a light hand in bringing your *protegés* back into the way in which they should go.

FRANCE. Hullo! I thought you'd forgotten all those old things.

JOHN BULL. Oh! a casual reminiscense, sweetheart, nothing more!

FRANCE. They liked us and admired us, notwithstanding.

JOHN BULL. Feared, rather.

FRANCE. Yes! They called Bonaparte the Sultan of Fire, and Desaix the Just Sultan.

JOHN BULL (*ironically*). They revolted then, to show you their friendship.

FRANCE. They did it in spite of themselves, forced on by the Mussulman clergy and the Mameluk Chiefs, furious.

JOHN BULL (*interrupting him*). And with good reason.

FRANCE (*continuing*). And with good reason, at having been dispossessed; but the mass of the people liked us.

JOHN BULL (*chaffing*). It was no doubt to prove it that one of them stabbed Kleber.

FRANCE. A fanatic.

JOHN BULL. Or a patriot.

FRANCE. Perhaps both! Nevertheless, it was an isolated case. (*Eyeing* JOHN BULL *from head to foot.*) You see, my dear friend, that you are not the only person who has spilt blood in Egypt, and that we have also moistened the land with ours.

JOHN BULL. And with that of others, after such hecatombs.

FRANCE. And with that of others, as you say very truly. Note that I do

not include in the number all those who enriched the soil with their remains before Menes.

JOHN BULL (*astonished*). Before Menes?

FRANCE (*very affirmative*). Yes, before Menes. Do you imagine the first invasion dates from that problematical King? Why, Egypt is so old that she no longer has any age, and her history is nothing but a series of invasions grafted one on the other. Egypt has long been eating, drinking, digesting, sleeping, and thinking, when Menes appears on the scene. With him begins written history, or rather drawn and coloured on miles of walls. Before him it was history related; tales of facts, originally true, which in being passed from mouth to mouth, revised, corrected and embroidered with all the extravagance of invention characterising our species, have come down to us altered, distorted into the form of absurd or childish fables, relating the marvellous reigns of heroes, divinities, and semi-divinities, who were really nothing more than abominable robber chiefs, raiding the country and inflicting a thousand miseries on its inhabitants. And the

more it is hidden in the darkness of time, the more the legend, coifed with its mysterious halo, affirms itself, at the expense of the fact, which becomes gradually obliterated, and in the end entirely fades away.

Humanity rises in rank in proportion as it goes back farther from the present. Our great great ancestors, who must have been a sort of hybrid beings partaking of both man and monkey, particularly the latter, would in that case be, hierarchically speaking, arch-gods, superior and sacro-saint divinities—which is not particularly the case. But the logic of the multitudes wills it so.

These famous legends of gods, of demi-gods, of heroes, ingenuous epics drawing the origin in their poetical mist, are but the distant echo, the recollection, obscured by centuries and engarlanded by imagination, of a series of invasions of nations or tribes, who swooped down successively on the Nile Valley. And so often did the flux and reflux of vagabond hordes of ferocious people in search of fertile land, occur,—so often did the land of Egypt absorb its conquerors of a day,—that the inhabitants have ended by becoming quite broken to these things,

as one becomes accustomed to the plague or cholera ; so accustomed, that at present they don't even trouble about it. They look upon these visitations as simple incidents in the ordinary course of nature. They accept them because they feel them to be inevitable, and endure them because they know that they will only be transient.

The invader arrives, instals himself, disappears or decamps ; another comes, who acts like his predecessor ; and so on. The fellah, robust and healthy, exuberant with life, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, without making a pint of good blood the less, toils, sings, laughs, receives blows, a tatterdemalion full of bantering indifference for his masters of the moment, whom, he knows full well, his climate will kill or drive away. Egypt has always devoured her conquerors, my friend.

JOHN BULL. You are unfolding a delightful prospect to me, my dear, of serving as a sort of side dish to this ogress, whom I overwhelm with good things.

FRANCE (*with an air of conviction*). Ah ! that, my poor man, is predestined ; it is written, as the Orientals say. You

must either decamp or resign yourself to being laid on the grill. There's no wriggling out of it.

If, then, in this blood-tax paid to Egypt by her various invaders, we leave aside the predecessors of Menes, and those who followed him—Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, Mameluks—you see we have largely discharged our debt of ruby liquid and that the share of English blood is only in infinitesimal proportions to the whole. Notwithstanding this, neither they nor we have remained there, and no more will you, who formerly threw the gates wide open to facilitate the exit of Bonaparte's soldiers.

JOHN BULL (*very doubtfully*). We shall see.

FRANCE. Certainly you will see. History repeats itself, my dear John Bull. After the others, us; after us, you; after you——

JOHN BULL (*interrupting her*). How easily you manage the thing! Wait a bit, sweetheart; you are in too great a hurry.

FRANCE. As much as you are the reverse. It's the same with conquests as with everything else—one nail drives

out the other. The last nail planted in Egypt's heart is you. Another nail will force it away. Egypt herself will undertake the task if necessary. She has sometimes spontaneous and terrible awakenings ; she is stubborn too, the old mummy !—patient, and chooses her own time. She knows how to wait, because she knows she is eternal.

JOHN BULL. Eternal? That's a large order !

FRANCE. As long, at least, as the Nile shall run between the Arabian and Libyan chains ; and it's not near being dried up yet.

JOHN BULL. Unless it be diverted from its course.

FRANCE. As a matter of fact Albuquerque had that idea in the fifteenth century, in order to preserve the Cape route, but I don't think it's likely to be taken up again.

JOHN BULL. Your great Frenchman alone—and he is dead—could have thought of doing it.

FRANCE. For what purpose ?

JOHN BULL. If only to have retrieved his reputation, after Panama.

FRANCE (*offended*). My dear John Bull, when, in spite of almost insur-

mountable obstacles of all kinds, one has brought to a happy issue a colossal enterprise in which, Nekao, Darius, Ptolemy, Philadelphus, Trajan, Amrou, and Omar, had failed, and has achieved that labour of giants which is called the Suez Canal—and should be styled the de Lesseps Canal—one has earned the gratitude, not merely of one's own country, but of the whole world. An old man with one foot in the grave cannot be held responsible for a disaster which, at his advanced age, he could neither foresee nor repair. The real guilty parties have been branded by France, and the last of this band of swindlers has just left Bow Street, booked through to Mazas. And if any one should be indulgent, my dear friend, it is you, who, after having put so many spokes in the wheel to prevent the success of this eighth wonder of the world, an enterprise that Lord Palmerston qualified disdainfully as an association of small people, and which your famous engineer Stevenson declared "impossible," have virtually gained possession of the canal, thanks to Disraeli's haul, making a sudden raid upon half the shares.

JOHN BULL. Ismael had offered

them to you before inviting us to take them.

FRANCE. We were not in a position to do it then, and did not think your Jews, observing our hesitation, were on the watch to buy them.

JOHN BULL. But you're never ready. It was just the same when it was a question of landing at Alexandria. You never take advantage of the opportunity when it comes ; and when another, better advised, lays hold of it, you shout treason. You should be more rational, my child.

FRANCE. Anyhow, you made a nice haul. The Khedive, in parting with the shares, undertook to pay five per cent. interest until the time came when they would participate in the profits of the Company ; and you knew how to extort that amount from him. Disraeli's co-religionists advanced you the money at three per cent. Clear profit two per cent. per annum, for a sum to which you never contributed one single farthing !

JOHN BULL. Business is business.

FRANCE. So much the worse for business, then.

JOHN BULL. And so much the better for Disraeli ; he was within his right.

FRANCE. But not doing his duty towards us ; and duty comes before right. One does not play such tricks on one's friends unawares, even "in these times of Jewish sharpness and Protestant weariess" ; but Disraeli was a Jew, and among people of that race, money takes the lead.

JOHN BULL (*conciliatingly*). Calm yourself, sweetheart, and let those ugly financial matters be. Like you, I admire the great Frenchman; I bow to his genius, and render justice to his resolute will. But apart from the Suez, or rather the de Lesseps, Canal—a remarkable work, I agree—I don't much see what else you have been able to do.

FRANCE (*in a very decided tone*). We have done everything, and done it well.

JOHN BULL (*smiling*). That's at least plain speaking : there's not a shadow of ambiguity about it.

FRANCE. It's strictly true; and from Bonaparte's time too.

JOHN BULL (*who does not seem at all convinced*). From Bonaparte's time ?

FRANCE. As I've the honour of telling you. The Commander-in-Chief's first act was to form the Egyptian Institute, composed of forty-eight members

divided into four sections : mathematical sciences, physical sciences, political economy, Literature and Fine Arts. Fourrier, Monge, Berthollet, Desgenettes, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Larrey, Denon, and others, were members.

JOHN BULL (*jocularly*). That idea of an Institute was capital, but from a practical point of view it was hardly up to the mark.

FRANCE (*ironically*). Indeed ! Wait a bit ! Bonaparte then appointed a Commission to study the agricultural, industrial, and historical questions of Egypt, with Fourrier and Costaz at the head.

JOHN BULL. That was worse still. I know what official commissions are ; they never come to anything, and always end in a flourish.

FRANCE (*continuing in the same quizzing tone*). Really ? And the magnificent work of the Egyptian Commission which resuscitated the Ancient Egypt of the Pharaohs and disclosed unexpected horizons of history—was that a flourish ?

JOHN BULL. That's written and pictorial history. I would prefer acts.

FRANCE. I'll give you acts, and nice

ones too. While the Commission studies it acts (*emphasising the word*). O practical man that you are, and no mistake ! At Cairo it opened a Lyceum.

JOHN BULL (*mocking*). There was need for it.

FRANCE. The educational nature of our expedition called for it.

JOHN BULL (*joking*). Education is a find. Education at the point of the bayonet is quite *piquant*.

FRANCE. It was necessary at that period.

JOHN BULL. And then ! you can't make an omelette without breaking the eggs, eh !

FRANCE. Your comprehension surprises me, John Bull.

JOHN BULL. And this Lyceum was for——?

FRANCE. The Arabs. Then they built a Mint and a Theatre.

JOHN BULL. The latter at least was a superfluity.

FRANCE. A church would have been better, eh ?

JOHN BULL. It would have been more respectable.

FRANCE. Bah ! Church or Theatre ?

JOHN BULL (*shocked*). But can you

compare one with the other? Consider a moment, I pray.

FRANCE. If I consider them, both are theatres; if I compare them, I find one wearisome, and the other amusing. That's how they differ.

JOHN BULL (*nettled*). You make fun of everything.

FRANCE. And you—you take everything seriously, even your respectability—to order.

JOHN BULL (*indignantly*). To order! Do you mean to doubt the sincerity of my respectability?

FRANCE (*very gaily*). Ah! That's a good joke! You very soon put it in the cloak-room, your venerable respectability, when it's in your way, my good old fellow—you who don't like to be inconvenienced.

JOHN BULL (*discountenanced*). You exaggerate, my child. If I depart from it at times, it is because I have important reasons for doing so.

FRANCE. You only strip yourself for the right motive—we know that. I like you better, all the same, without that old out-of-date garment. You are ridiculous in it, and a good chap like you has no need to muffle himself up like a

dirty church rat, to be appreciated at his true value. You are a thousand times better stark naked.

JOHN BULL (*whose modesty is up in arms at once*). Stark naked!

FRANCE (*laughing*). *Proh pudor.* Do not be uneasy, bashful soul. I mean without your carapace of hypocritical respectability. It makes you clumsy, and spoils your rough frankness.

JOHN BULL (*affected*). Ah, my friend, how you know me!

FRANCE (*modestly*). Skin deep only. I went no further, for fear of being disillusioned. What I know of you pleases me, and that suffices.

JOHN BULL. And what else did your Bonaparte, that universal genius, that Jack-of-all-trades in epaulettes, invent at Cairo, my pet—for he couldn't have stopped short on such a fine road?

FRANCE (*off-handedly*). A lot of things, apart from beating Mameluks and Turks;—factories of arms which turned out cannons, cannon-balls, muskets, sabres, steel, surgical, optical and mathematical instruments; lock-smiths' workshops; then cloth, linen, and cardboard manufactories; paper-mills and printing offices, publishing two

newspapers—*La decade Scientifique et litteraire* and *Le Courrier d'Egypte*. Then there were goldsmiths, lace-makers, and military tailors who introduced new methods and formed pupils among the Arabs, who surpassed their masters. Plate and furniture are manufactured. All the luxury of the West, in a word, thanks to us, is spread throughout Egypt; and all this improvised on the spot, by the expeditionary Corps, without any assistance from the Mother Country, with whom communications were interrupted by you. Moreover, a lazaretto was built at Rodah. At Cairo and in its neigbourhood, water- and wind-mills succeeded the native hand-mills. Desaix, on the other hand, organised Upper Egypt and made himself beloved by his uprightness. All these prodigies of activity were accomplished whilst fighting battles, suppressing revolts at Cairo and in the Delta, and making expeditions beyond the country.

JOHN BULL. But you had no Mahdi to pester you.

FRANCE. Excuse me. Apart from Murad and his Mameluks, who were a good deal more to be feared than your

Mahdi, we also had our Mahdi in flesh and bones, who cut out a good deal of work for us. Only, he didn't last long with Bonaparte's generals. They killed him once for all ; they didn't drag the thing out, and play with him, as you do with yours. Instead of making a bogy of him, they did him thoroughly to death once for all, by lodging a little lead in his brain.

JOHN BULL. You had an excellent Army—I say nothing to the contrary : remarkable men of learning I am ready to admit, clever artisans I grant you ; but army, artisans, and learned men came from France. The implements were perfect, and, being at hand, you only had to make use of them. Whereas we have created a native army from beginning to end.

FRANCE. With the remains of that organised by our officers, if you please, while Bonaparte formed one that was really quite new. He organised a special Corps of Arab, Fellaheen and Soudanese, and even Neapolitan soldiers, whose vessels, having taken refuge in the Port of Alexandria, had been burnt by the Admiral of the English fleet, contrary to the law of nations.

JOHN BULL. This gathering of heterogeneous elements, although decked with your officers, could hardly have been disciplined?

FRANCE. Disciplined like ours, Mr. John Bull—sufficiently so for those whom Bonaparte took with him into Syria to behave themselves like picked troops.

JOHN BULL (*bitterly*). Without succeeding, however, in taking St. Jean d'Acre.

FRANCE. Hulloa! Why, your memory's returning again. Still reminiscences, eh?

JOHN BULL. Oh! flashes, wandering memories!

FRANCE. If we did not take St. Jean d'Acre, it was by reason of the criminal manœuvres of treacherous French deserters and emigrants, among others of Fromelin and Philippeaux, of the latter especially, an old schoolfellow of Bonaparte, who organised the defence of the city with satanic genius.

JOHN BULL. Supported by the English fleet, commanded by Sydney Smith, his friend, I think.

FRANCE (*angrily*). That goes without saying. We always find you there when we would like to see you at the devil.

JOHN BULL. Thanks for the compliment.

FRANCE (*in a tone of decision*). Ah! you know I don't mince matters. I call a spade a spade.

JOHN BULL. And John Bull a——

FRANCE (*interrupting him*). Ah, no! That would not be nice. You don't say nasty things among friends.

JOHN BULL (*reproachfully*). You only think them?

FRANCE. Nor that either, old boy, for if I had such thoughts I would neither accept your friendship nor would I do you the honour of giving you mine.

JOHN BULL (*courteously bowing*). Excuse me for having interrupted you. Pray continue.

FRANCE (*continuing*). Your famous Camel-Corps, to revert to the army, is a plagiarism of the dromedary corps formed by Bonaparte—with this difference, that whilst your dromedaries only carry one man, the others had two, back to back.

JOHN BULL. So as to be able to have a bit of gossip. You are so talkative, you Gauls!

FRANCE. And you so little sociable,

my good friend, that if they had put two of you together on one of those ungraceful animals and had omitted to introduce you, the campaign would have come to an end without No. 1 having said a word to No. 2. And all these fine things—note it well—were accomplished by a little young man of twenty-nine, in fifteen months, with the whole of Europe to contend with, and Turkey in Europe and Asia into the bargain. That was sufficiently expeditious, eh! What do you say?

JOHN BULL (*quietly*). I say I am of the opinion of the Sheikh of Cairo whom Bonaparte once asked, "During the two months I have been among you, what have you learnt that seems to you most useful?" "To drink while eating," answered the other. And I don't think the Egyptians have retained much else of all the apparatus of civilisation you imported among them I believe them refractory to all progress.

FRANCE. In any case, the part we played was a fine one.

JOHN BULL. And you performed it rapidly and splendidly. You love glory, and cultivate the laurel, a plant that is costly and yields little. We prefer com-

fort, and look after our interests, so as to get the money to procure it. You are from the South, we are from the North ; you are of the Latin race, we are of Saxon blood. You have irresistible bursts of impulse, but incomprehensible fits of weariness ; we go at a steadier pace, but are less easily fatigued. You proceed by leaps and bounds ; we advance by regular stages. You are enthusiasts, with warm blood and delicate appetites ; we are cold-blooded animals, practical persons with powerful instincts, formidably armed for the struggle for life. There, where Desaix wrote a memorable page of history, we are thinking of doing work that will be profitable. You linger everlastingly over the agreeable ; we go straight to the useful.

You and I are two living antitheses, my dear friend, and if all our qualities were to be amalgamated, the product would constitute a pretty handsome appanage for the party to whom it might fall. Such a blend, 'pon my honour, would very nearly have attained perfection.

You have the light foot and the light hand, you children of France, brave to madness and holding your heart in your

hand ; but I fancy if you be more fitted than any one to conquer the world, we are better organised for keeping it.

Each his part. You pick lovely fruit with a dexterity without equal ; we enjoy it with unutterable satisfaction.

FRANCE. If you had only even cupboard gratitude!

JOHN BULL (*disdainfully*). Gratitude, my dear, is the virtue of the weak. (*Striking his chest.*) And I am strong.

FRANCE. A strong, brave man in everything, notwithstanding your apparent coarseness. At bottom, you are less wicked than you appear to be. It pleases you to adopt a gruff voice from time to time, but it would be repugnant to you to push things to extremes, unless you were absolutely forced. Warfare does not pay, and you don't care for what brings in no profit. When the pack of Powers is a-hunting and the uncoupling of the dogs has commenced, you raise your voice—a beautiful, full sonorous voice ; and when some one barks louder than you, and an angry baritone covers the somewhat hoarse thunder of your bass, you lower the pitch of it.

JOHN BULL. Out of politeness, my dear.

FRANCE. Politeness which sails very near prudence.

JOHN BULL. Prudence is the mother of security, my child, and one cannot show too much of it.

But reverting, if you will, to your superb legion and to that admirable navy improvised with a wave of a magic wand by Napoleon—what became of them after your departure?

FRANCE. They did not turn out so badly, and a few other Frenchmen who remained in the country brought some honour upon themselves.

After the capitulation of Alexandria on the 25th of June, 1801, which forced us to evacuate Egypt, this heterogeneous army made shift pretty well under Mohammed Khosrou, the first Viceroy of Egypt appointed by Turkey.

When Mehemet Ali, that Turk, born in Macedonia and brought up by a certain Frenchman named Leon, seized power, he took for Military Adviser another Frenchman named Drovelli, and to re-organise and command his army, one of Bonaparte's former colonels; Selves, who afterwards became Soliman Pacha. This latter immediately filled up the vacancies in the negro regiments with

a few hundred Frenchmen, Mameluks, and Albanians, while another officer at Alexandria, who was also French, formed and instructed a navy.

During this time at Cairo, another Frenchman established a cannon foundry, and Clot Bey, who was of the same nationality, founded the School of Medicine at Kasr-el-Ain, on the model of those in France, and three other Frenchmen — always Frenchmen ! — established the military hospital at Abou Zaleb, the School of Staff Officers at Kauka, and the Egyptian Artillery.

Selves, or rather Soliman Pacha, as you see, got through a good deal of work in a very short time. In six months, besides getting a fleet ready for sea, he had equipped and disciplined twenty-four thousand men.

JOHN BULL. Were they any good ?

FRANCE. You will see. Seventeen thousand embarked on the fleet and in a trice pacified Caudia and subdued Morea.

JOHN BULL. And were then annihilated, as well as the squadron carrying them, and the Turkish fleet, their ally, at the battle of Navarino, if my memory does not fail me ?

FRANCE. Can you have any doubt on the matter? A prodigious memory, my friend, for any one accusing himself of having none. You slander yourself, John Bull.

JOHN BULL (*modestly*). Oh! my memory is quite intermittent—just a date here and there.

FRANCE. But turning up just at the right moment.

JOHN BULL. Merely by chance, sweetheart.

FRANCE. Morea and Caudia nevertheless remained in possession of Egypt. After this blow, Mehemet Ali's Frenchmen built him a maritime arsenal at Alexandria, and in two years made him another navy.

JOHN BULL. Any good?

FRANCE. Sufficiently so to capture St. Jean d'Acre, and pursue the Turkish fleet to Constantinople.

JOHN BULL. But no army after Navarino.

FRANCE. Re-organised in a trice, my noble friend, with a new French staff, Soliman at the head, and numbering thirty thousand men.

JOHN BULL. But that's an Arabian Nights tale you're telling me.

FRANCE. Any one might think so; but it is history.

JOHN BULL. This time, however, it must have been a regular mob, this herd of heterogeneous recruits, made up of odds and ends.

FRANCE. Herd if you like, but an heroic herd, who drove the Turks in front of them at the beat of the drum, overcoming them everywhere, crushing them at Homs and Komieh, forcing Mahmoud, the Sultan at Constantinople, to sign the treaties of Rustaich and Unkar-Skalezzi, which conferred upon Mehemet Ali the government of Syria, conquered in one year by thirty thousand recruits. That was a pretty good beginning for a herd.

JOHN BULL. It was certainly promising.

FRANCE. And what looked promising, became fulfilment; inasmuch as in the interval the army had increased from thirty to fifty thousand men.

JOHN BULL. Lor'! The more killed, the more there were.

FRANCE. It looks like it. It is none the less true that the Sultan having sought to reconquer Syria, Soliman Pacha, who shared the command of the army

with Ibrahim, son of Mehemet Ali, soundly defeated him, notwithstanding the sudden defection of some of his own troops, at Nezib, whilst the Turkish fleet at Mahmoud's death entered the port of Alexandria, and surrendered to the Viceroy. Had he chosen, he could have been Sultan of Constantinople. He had the wisdom not to choose.

JOHN BULL. It's marvellous! But it was too good to last.

FRANCE. You were born a prophet, my friend; as a matter of fact, it did not last. It was you who contributed to upset the machine. The Turks, aided by you, retook Syria, forcing Mehemet Ali to reduce his army to eighteen thousand men, to send the fleet to Constantinople; and at the treaty of Loudon in 1840, France had the utmost trouble in the world to preserve to him the remainder of his territory, and make the throne hereditary in his family. But anyhow, what was done was not bad, was it, for recruits? And this Egyptian army, instructed in the French style, commanded by Frenchmen, will bear comparison with that quite modern one of your Sirdar Kitchener. Its two campaigns in Syria are well worth that

unsuccessful and uselessly deadly attempt at a junction made by Wolseley, that pretentious cunctator waging war tourist fashion, with a Badaeker in place of an intelligence department map, with Cook and Son as Barnum, leaving in the hands of the Mahdi, Gordon, the most chivalrous figure of modern times, and Khartoum, the key to Upper Egypt, conquered by Ibraham Pasha. Those two campaigns don't cut a bad figure beside your off-hand battles at Kafr Dawar, Tel el Kebir, Kassassin, or of your quadrilles of lancers, as brilliant as devoid of result, with Osman Digma at Suakim.

JOHN BULL (*somewhat vexed*). That we let Khartoum be captured is unfortunately true. That we were unable to save Gordon, was deplorable.

FRANCE (*bitterly*). More than deplorable—it was criminal.

JOHN BULL. We did what we could, however.

FRANCE. What you could, but not what you should—and that too late, and surlily. More should have been done, and what was done should have been done more quickly. One never calculates in a matter of duty, and they

calculated at the War Office—or in other quarters.

JOHN BULL (*proudly*). Our soldiers fought very well, Madame!

FRANCE. Like lions, officers and men, as always. They did their duty, and deserved the gratitude of their country; but with another commander-in-chief, less of a procrastinator—a Roberts for example—they would have relieved Khartoum and saved Gordon. He was worth it.

JOHN BULL (*bowing*). I thank you for doing justice to the value of our men, my dear friend. Still, you are a little hard upon their commander-in-chief—a bit of a carpet knight, like your general Lebœuf, but of unquestionable bravery.

FRANCE (*hastily*). And unquestioned. But his military capacity is questioned. When two Army corps march parallel, after having fixed a date and place for their junction, and the commander-in-chief arrives with his corps a month or so after the appointed time, it's stiff.

The man who led the never-to-be-forgotten retreat from Candahar, which might have been a disaster, and became,

by the fact of his indomitable energy, a glorious exploit, would have arrived to the minute, watch in hand.

JOHN BULL. One must take into account the difficulties; and they were numerous.

FRANCE. They should be foreseen, if they are to be overcome. That's a general's duty. It's the head regulating the movement of the body. It was with that, my dear friend, as with your irrigation works and other exploits, where you have not had the courage of your soldiers to redeem your complete want of foresight.

JOHN BULL. And under Mehemet Ali, no doubt, thanks to your eminent men of learning, to your profound thinkers, they showed a foresight beyond limit?

FRANCE (*complacently*). Indeed, yes! Under Mehemet Ali, and also under his successors.

First of all, under Mehemet Ali, there is the digging of Mahmoudieh Canal, according to the drawings of Lepère, one of the members of the Egyptian Commission, who at the request of Bonaparte had already elaborated the plan of a canal between the two

seas, which started from Pelusium and ended at Suez. This plan was taken up by de Lesseps later on, and, with some modifications, carried out.

It is Mougel Bey who commences the Barrage on the Nile.

JOHN BULL. Which we are finishing.

FRANCE. Repairing only. It is Jumel who introduces the cultivation of cotton, and assists Mehemet Ali in establishing cotton-mills, sugar-refineries, rum-distilleries, saltpetre works by evaporation, and so forth. Engineers and mechanics come from France to erect fortresses, bridges, reservoirs, doctors study the diseases of the country and direct the hospitals, while all the Egyptian youth come and learn in our schools.

France has, so to say, recovered Egypt, and, rousing it from its century-old lethargy, has restored to it the common life of nations.

JOHN BULL. Those are very grand phrases, my dear!

FRANCE. They suit the facts. We have galvanised this corpse.

JOHN BULL (*with assurance*). And we are completing your work, by assisting the resuscitated to walk.

FRANCE (*ironically*). By binding it

hand and foot, by winding it again in its bandlets, to lay it down again at the bottom of its *serdab*. The spark of life that we rekindled in Egypt is very near expiring, I fear.

JOHN BULL. Oh! we are there, my pet, to keep the smouldering, sacred fire alight.

FRANCE (*laughing*). You look a nice vestal, my stout old fellow.

JOHN BULL (*bridling up, and very gay*). One has seen worse. We know our business. I've good lungs and shall blow hard on your spark to——

FRANCE (*interrupting him and continuing the phrase*).——blow it out.

JOHN BULL (*becoming sad*). You always attribute ideas to me.

FRANCE. Good! You are an angel! That's understood. But let me continue. Under the successors of Mehemet Ali, Cordier, entrusted with the water supply, brings it to Alexandria, aerated and filtered before being sent through the pipes. This undertaking was sold later on to the Khedive and re-assigned to the English. Lebon does the same for Cairo, and Pierre and Poisson for Assiout.

Lasseron, on the other hand, lays down eighty kilometres of pipes, conveying

drinking water from Ismailia to Port Said, and supplies fresh water to Suez, which previously received it in cases despatched by Cordier, replacing in those days the water brought from the Ganges in leathern bags by your own vessels.

JOHN BULL. But we also have done something in this connection. Have we not a machine drawing up from the Nile the water necessary for the Catatbeh Canal?

FRANCE. I know my friend; but for your own self-respect it would be better not to speak of it.

JOHN BULL (*ruffled*). What! A system of powerful pumps made in English workshops!

FRANCE. Which cost a hundred and twenty thousand pounds—no mean sum.

JOHN BULL (*in an off-hand way*). A mere nothing for a piece of work of that value.

FRANCE. One might have passed over the price if the apparatus had been able to work; but it came into the world still-born.

JOHN BULL (*doubtingly*). Without ever having been able to work?

FRANCE. Oh! for a moment. Just long enough to show how badly it acted.

JOHN BULL (*very disconcerted*). And then?

FRANCE. It rested from its labours.

JOHN BULL (*not yet convinced*). Were no efforts made to——

FRANCE. Oh, yes! A number of efforts were made, but at a dead loss.

JOHN BULL (*clinging to a last hope*). Perhaps, however, if they had persevered, they would have obtained a result. Intelligent repairs——

FRANCE. No, my friend, nothing would have availed. They tried the possible, and even the impossible, to set your poor engine right, but nothing had any effect. You must resign yourself to it; it was a complete fiasco, a failure, as they say on your side of the Channel; and the author of this monumental and costly farce must have hidden a severe one in his brain.

JOHN BULL (*who is at a loss to catch her meaning*). A what?

FRANCE (*joking*). A crack.

JOHN BULL. Ah, well! I see the joke now.

FRANCE. He had *une araignèe dans*

le plafond—literally put into English, a spider in the ceiling.

JOHN BULL (*more than ever at sea*). A spider, you say?

FRANCE (*laughing*). And of a peculiar size, too, the poor fellow. You don't understand, eh?

JOHN BULL (*very perplexed*). I admit I don't quite catch the thing.

FRANCE. Well, then, a tile loose. It means that the inventor of this ingenious mechanism was nothing else but a vulgar pedant in the matter of science, and that your famous watering apparatus is no more than an incoherent assemblage of pieces of cast iron, an encumbering implement, good to throw away amongst old metal.

Look here, my good friend, between us two, you are not clever for an aquatic of your might; you only avoid Charybdis to strike on Scylla, with interludes of experiments, disastrous for your reputation and the purse of those you labour for.

JOHN BULL. Can any one say——?

FRANCE. Yes! and prove it too. You started formerly by throwing open the barrier of earth separating the sea and Lake Mareotis, inundating thousands

of acres of cultivated land with salt water. And as a pendant to that unqualifiable act of barbarism, and also to cover the inanity of your irrigation experiences in the Cherakis lands, you excogitate an absurd system of dykes, the least inconvenience of which would be to give the last stroke to Philæ, already a good deal injured by man and time. You know, my good fellow, between us, you are a droll—irrigator.

JOHN BULL (*perplexed*). Irrigator?

FRANCE. Distributor of water, if you prefer it.

JOHN BULL. But that trench opened in the embankment and producing an artificial lake was no innovation on my part. Others did it before me. The Dutch broke through their dykes and transformed their own country into a lake. It's true it did not do them much service.

FRANCE. If not to present the rather rare and eminently curious sight of a fleet captured by being boarded by squadrons of cavalry.

JOHN BULL (*facetiously*). Horse Marines, no doubt.

FRANCE. No, my friend, only some of Napoleon's horsemen.

JOHN BULL. I only followed their example, after all.

FRANCE. The example of whom? The horsemen?

JOHN BULL. No, the Dutch.

FRANCE (*smartly*). Excuse me. They were at home, and it was to defend themselves, whereas in your case it was to attack. And you were in other people's country, which is quite another matter. I know very well that you always consider yourself at home wherever you happen to be; but there are limits in all things.

JOHN BULL (*vexed*). Then according to you we have done no good in Egypt. That's understood. Irrigation past or projected?

FRANCE. Fantastical, not to say more.

JOHN BULL. Army?

FRANCE. Incompletely officered, to the unjust exclusion of natives from the high ranks, which is a germ of dissolution for the force and a danger for Egypt, the day she is left to her own strength.

JOHN BULL. The finances?

FRANCE. Ruined, or at least manipulated with singular ease.

JOHN BULL. Public instruction?

FRANCE. Nil!

JOHN BULL. Justice?

FRANCE. Ditto!

JOHN BULL. Agriculture?

FRANCE. Crippled by too heavy taxation.

JOHN BULL. Fluvial navigation?

FRANCE. Crushed by the tolls.

JOHN BULL. Public Works?

FRANCE. A torrent of unfruitful and ruinous experiments, except the repairs effected at the Barrage and a few knick-knacks; a bridge, the small, ugly and little-used bridge at Gizeh, which has a very poor appearance beside that of Kasr el Nil, which we built.

JOHN BULL (*sarcastically*). What a pity you are not in my place, my dear girl. Under your impeccable administration, Egypt would become a model for other nations.

FRANCE. That would not surprise me. In any case what civilisation she has, comes from us; and even now our influence is still preponderant. Quite a cluster of learned Frenchmen have searched, and still search, the old land of the Pharaohs. They exhume its history and recast its annals. Champollion,

DeRougé, Ampère, Le Normand, Nestor L'hote, Letronne, Mariette, Maspero, and De Morgan, have created Egyptology.

JOHN BULL. And Lepsius, Brugsch, Duemichen, Birch, Wilkinson, Godwin, Petrie, and the others? Do you consider them of no account?

FRANCE. I consider them remarkable men of science; but if you put the achievements of French savants on one side of the balance, and those of foreigners on the other, France will carry the day in the same proportion as the number of English vessels passing through the Canal is superior to that of all the other ships of the world put together. They have done much, but we more; and we were the first. That's all.

The chief buildings have been constructed by us, the Opera, the French theatre, besides the palace and a number of private houses, due to French architects. The Esbekieh garden was laid out by a Frenchman.

JOHN BULL (*in a honeyed tone*). They are also indebted to you for the Haussmannisation of a part of Cairo, and it's not handsome, although French.

FRANCE. It was purely a hygienic measure.

JOHN BULL. A measure as regrettable as hygienic in any case, and the reason why marvels of Arab architecture have been destroyed. You were a little —vandalic, my friend.

FRANCE. I acknowledge it, and say a sincere *Mea culpa. Errare humanum est.*

JOHN BULL. *Et perseverare diabolicum.* So, for fear lest, once on the incline, you should slide down to the bottom, I shall keep Egypt—a little while longer ; if only to spare you the disagreeableness of making other acts of contrition.

FRANCE. It's all very fine, my good man. If my faults are recorded, it's long since they ceased to register yours—the work was too hard. Allow me to continue the enumeration rather of all that is due to us in Egypt—even the mistakes.

JOHN BULL. Go on, my dear child.

FRANCE. Everything touching law and justice is of French origin, is still French in most cases, and the decrees and judgments are delivered in our language. In the domain of instruction, it is our scholastic system that is adopted. The higher branches of Education, the

Polytechnic School, Normal School, School of Arts and Crafts, School of Egyptology, the Staff College, and the Gunnery and Cavalry Schools, are French. They are, it is true, now being reformed in the English fashion, but slowly and with difficulty. It is uphill work.

Central schools exist in the chief provincial towns at Benha, Tantah, Mansourah, Beni-Souef, Minieh, Assiout. We have founded or managed poor-schools, orphanages, and blind asylums. All these establishments are exclusively designated in French and Arab ; those two languages are taught there, apart from the Koran, before anything else, and, with the exception of elementary classes, the instruction is generally in French. Now they have added English.

The agricultural enterprise at Bedrechin is in French hands ; that of the Delta, recently ceded to the English, was also. The large majority of liberal professions are exercised by Frenchmen. As to commerce, it is again ours that predominates ; linen drapers, dress-makers, grocers, wine-merchants, bankers, printers, and newspapers—all French. And if you eat early green peas here you owe it to Frenchmen, who intro-

duced them into Egypt and established market gardens along the banks of the Nile. And of this you, with your re-refined palate, will not complain, I hope. Well! Is it sufficiently French? sufficiently impregnated with us?—this Egypt, which you are endeavouring in vain, for the fold is made, to anglicise. Have we spent sufficient blood and money there? Have we lavished enough advice, lessons, men, upon it? Is it we—yes or no!—who aroused it from its torpor, to re-unite it to civilisation? Who, then, if it were not we, set it on its legs, and taught it to make use of them?

JOHN BULL (*keenly*). Ah! my modest friend, you sing your own praises so well that there remains nothing for me to add to complete them.

FRANCE (*drily*). I have explained the facts, nothing else; it is they that sing my praises, and not myself. (*Changing her tone all at once, and with a very determined air.*) But look here. Now that the situation is clearly established between us, let us show our hands a bit. Leave off for a moment playing the part of the great white pelican

who pierces its breast to feed . . . the children of others. It is unworthy of you, and does not deceive any one. Come to the fact, and let us play with the cards on the table. You obstinately refuse to pack up and be off from Egypt. First, because, master of the country, you hold the Canal and keep the key in your pocket —for it is the key of India. And you do that to the detriment of the other nations, who may, one fine morning, find a door closed which, according to all principles of equity, should always remain open to them, the Canal having been declared of general utility. Second, because you would not be displeased to connect Egypt with your other African possessions by means of the Upper Soudan, of which you would get possession in some shuffling way, as you tried to do with the Transvaal, in order to form a gigantic colonial Empire, facing three seas and comprising half the east and south of the Dark Continent. That would be a compensation by anticipation for the prospective loss of other parts of your colonial Empire, enroached upon by the jealousy of other Powers, who have no colonies, and wish to repair the errors of destiny by substituting them-

selves for you. Russia has a long arm.

JOHN BULL. But not a farthing.

FRANCE. All the more reason for her being tempted to fill her purse and lay her hand on regions from which you have known how to extract such wealth.

JOHN BULL. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, my charmer.

FRANCE. Russia has already planted the first stakes of her marches. Yesterday she was at Khiva, to-day she is at Merv, to-morrow she will be at Herat.

JOHN BULL. And we also, to bar the road.

FRANCE. No more than you were at Khiva and Merv ; and God knows, if you did not deafen our ears at the time with your bellicose intentions, with your irrevocable decision not to tolerate such impudence on the part of Russia, you made yourself quite hoarse, while Russia, without a word, established her quarters there permanently. Thereupon you took a cup of tea and thought no more about it. You let them do as they liked, and you will do so again.

JOHN BULL. You'll see !

FRANCE. Ah, yes, I'll see. I take you at your word, and Russia knows what that is. The powerful beast, heedless of your threats as of your recriminations, which she knows will always be platonic, continues her dark and terrible march forward, fortifying herself as fast as she gains territory.

JOHN BULL (*tragically*). India will be her grave.

FRANCE. They were already going to read the prayers of the dead over her at Khiva, then say her *de profundis* at Merv ; and yet it was the Russians who sang their Allelujahs !

JOHN BULL. We hold the Tablelands of the Pamirs, which are the key to India.

FRANCE. Whilst your Commissioners are playing the surveying game, the Cossacks canter about in full liberty, camp there, and indulge in amusing fantasias under the nose of these inoffensive delineators of frontiers, who dance attendance on them in the wild gorges.

JOHN BULL. The Hindoos love us.

FRANCE. As the Arabs love us in Algeria, to fall on our backs at the first opportunity. As the Egyptians love you. You have the ridiculous mania of

wishing to be loved for yourself, my poor friend. You must cure yourself of that folly ; it is very costly, and often exposes you to bitter disappointments.

JOHN BULL. I tell you they'll march with us against the invader.

FRANCE. They will welcome him with open arms, rather. The oppressed rarely feels any tenderness for the oppressor. The vanquished like changing masters, if only to see the new one avenge them of the old one.

JOHN BULL. Russia alone can do nothing against us.

FRANCE. Such is not my opinion ; but China also shows velleities to become a military nation, and seems to be on tolerably good terms with Russia.

JOHN BULL (*profoundly disdainful*). China ! A flock of pacific brutes beyond expression, cowardly to the point of preferring to open their belly and destroy themselves, to being compelled to fight !

FRANCE. A flock of more than six hundred million men ; and you have seen what a flock of well-officered, well-led and disciplined brutes were able to do under Mehemet Ali. Besides, it would not be the first time that Asia

has let loose these scourges upon us. The race from which Attila sprang is not extinct. This ferocious Hun, who conquered Asia, imposed tribute on Theodosius, exacted presents from Valentinian, sacked Europe before, and even after, his followers were cut to pieces by us at Orleans, and who boasted that the grass never grew where his steed had planted his hoof, has left imitators. Gengis-Khan with his Mongol hordes, and Timour-Leng the Tartar, ravaged Asia one after the other. "*Ou le pere a passé passera bien l'enfant!*" Other chiefs, the issue of these races, may recommence what they have done, and try what effect their horses' hoofs will produce on the vegetation of our meadows. Beware of Asia, my friend.

JOHN BULL. And you, then, the nearest neighbour of the great-grandchildren of these highwaymen with slanting eyes and yellow skin?

FRANCE. I do nothing else.

JOHN BULL (*bantering*). One wouldn't say so, to see the eagerness and insistence with which you sought to snatch a strip of territory from us on the Upper Mekong. No doubt it is for the pleasure of being shown the door later on that

you have installed yourself with so much trouble in that part of the world?

FRANCE (*slyly*). Out of friendship for you, my good friend; to participate in your misfortune at the critical moment. A misfortune shared by two is less heavy to bear.

JOHN BULL. Yes; but a good deal of water will flow through the bridge between now and then.

FRANCE. As you say! Nevertheless don't fail to take your precautions and keep your eye on Asia. It's Pandora's box of humanity. It was from there that all the evils issued which have spread over the globe; and the box is not empty.

JOHN BULL. But believe me, my friend, China is not to be feared.

FRANCE. China, my dear friend! She's the future mistress of Asia, after Russia. The latter will act, towards China, the part of bulwark, long performed by Poland against the Slav. It will be Holy Russia who, at a given moment, will receive the first shock of these barbarians when they rush upon Europe, divided, enervated, and softened; and God grant that the Russians may then have a firm heart and hard muscles.

JOHN BULL. What an astute *exegête*

you are, my learned friend! and with what certainty you are able to read the decrees of destiny! Your imagination knows no bounds.

FRANCE. Like your unshaken confidence in yourself—illimitable.

JOHN BULL. But if the yellow people are one of these days to lunch off Asia, commencing with your possessions by way of absinthe and my India as a pleasant *hors d'œuvre* to give them an appetite, I don't see why Africa, on its side, to follow your reasoning, should not do duty as supper to the blacks, with our colonies as sweets and yours as dessert.

FRANCE. It's more than probable that it will be so. Africa for the Africans is a thing that will become imperative within a certain lapse of time—and sooner, perhaps, than is imagined.

JOHN BULL. You are dreaming, my dear friend.

FRANCE. I'm thoroughly wide-awake, on the contrary, and wish you would only be as much so to the dangers that threaten you—that threaten us. Those primitive beings who were present at the last convulsion of the globe, when being definitely solidified, those con-

temporaries of distant and monstrous species now extinct, have, in past times, covered the surface of the earth with their dark multitudes. This ebony, with oily skin and curly hair, burdened with antiquity and saturated with sun, these ancient colonists of the soil barely uncovered by the waters, could—if the terrestrial axis were only to incline a few degrees on the plane of its orbit, so as to change the climate and make palms grow where firs now stand—return to their original quarters, evacuated at the glacial period.

JOHN BULL. Supposing you were to give a push with your thumb to the axis of the earth, to obtain this result so much desired?

FRANCE. It will not be necessary for those in Africa, at least, to await the premature push with the thumb you advise me to give, to obtain that hypothetical result. In the United States of America, at Saint Dominica, they have already begun taking possession. Whites black the shoes of former slaves, who have become wealthy bankers.

After all, every one takes his good where he finds it, and these worthy blackamoors are simply returning to

their own place. After having feared us, they will take our measure, assimilate our means of action, particularly our mode of fighting, which we are teaching them daily, by forming them into regiments and disciplining them, and, in their turn, will make themselves feared.

The whites, notwithstanding their numerous establishments, their partially successful efforts to acclimatise themselves, lose ground daily, and the negro, prolific to the last degree, like the Boer, who will be his worst and final adversary in the future, gains in proportion.

No fusion is possible between white and black. The distinctive characters of the races, without counting instinctive and mutual repulsion, are so thoroughly defined at the present day that the cross-breeding which, after three generations, ends in sterility, or rather in the absorption of the white blood in the mass of black blood, is not possible. The two races, on the other hand, are so thoroughly accustomed to their respective climates that to change them, otherwise than momentarily, would be suicide for one or the other.

To-day your servant, the negro will be your master to-morrow. Notwith-

standing your colonies and ours, which press them as in a vice, these prognathous men will break the instrument and cast us into the sea.

JOHN BULL. Let's hope they will limit themselves to that, and not pursue us beyond the seas to our homes.

FRANCE. Well! I will not pledge myself they won't. These first samples of the human species issued from the mould, might desire to take back their seat at table, and be served in their turn. They peopled the continents long before the yellow man made his apparition, long before the indefatigable manufacturer of worlds had tried his new method and had modelled the white, the third and little satisfactory sketch of the *genus homo*, now perfected and borealis, pending the time when, disgusted with his last trial not responding to his views, he throws this rough figure into the basket, and takes up his tools to create a new work.

Then will appear the marvellous and necessary being who will succeed us all —black, yellow, and white, indefatigable pioneers who curved for thousands of years over this ungrateful soil, grubbing it up without rest or truce, unconscious

preparers of the habitation and comfort of our future substitute, making the Eden where this elect and last emanation of the Divine Brain will instal himself, habitable, healthy, and agreeable.

Then man, having fulfilled his double part of gardener and manure, will go and rejoin in nothingness his fossil predecessors.

JOHN BULL. You are in the secret of the gods, my beautiful pythoness. You really believe in all that?

FRANCE. I think that it will come to pass, and in the interval I am of opinion that these worthy blackamoors, as soon as they begin to feel their strength, might endeavour to regain their patrimony. We are the latest comers, and as such should have only the lowest place *tarde venientibus ossa*; instead of that, we have taken the top of the table and the sides also, and, more voracious than our hosts, we lick the platter clean. Let us hope that, later on, we shall not have to pay dearly for our excessive greediness.

JOHN BULL. Do you happen to know of any other corner of the earth in regard to which you could exercise your surprising faculty of divination, my clever prophetess.

FRANCE. You have feasted so at the colonial banquet that the larder is empty, my dear friend. But beware of the newcomers, of the poor wretches with empty stomachs, stung in their turn by the colonial tarantula. They will not allow you time to sweep up the last cutlets that have escaped your gluttony, and I'm afraid they'll trouble your digestion of what you've eaten previously.

JOHN BULL. So long as I have not to bring up what I'm now digesting——

FRANCE (*interrupting him*). John Bull, you are becoming vulgar, my friend.

JOHN BULL. Pardon! I was thinking of the banquet. So long as I have not to give back what I've got hold of, I meant to say, I am satisfied.

FRANCE. Unfortunately that might easily happen. Russia, I have just told you, is roving very near your Indian frontier, and China follows servilely in her footsteps. There is nothing either to show that Canada willingly, or by force, will not one of these days bow you out, and connect herself more closely with your estimable cousin Jonathan. He also, like you, is partial to his ease, and for some time past has

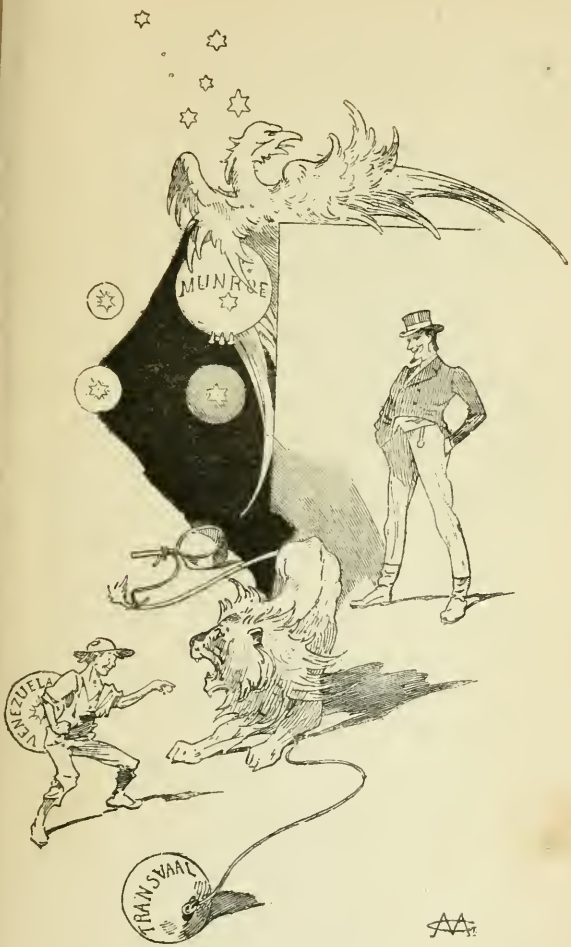
been twisting the tail of your lion with rare impertinence and most significant perseverance.

JOHN BULL. Oh! only to amuse himself—nothing more. It's a diversion for him, like any other—the pleasantry of a spoilt child, inclined to mischief. It's like his inexplicable mania for chipping everything within reach with a knife—every bit of wood that falls into his hands, even to the chair on which he sits—and making shavings of it. All that is nothing but exaggerated nervousness, and has not the slightest importance.

FRANCE. Mind he doesn't end by cutting the tail of your feline animal, and making soup of it: *lion's-tail* instead of *ox-tail*, to change his usual bill of fare. You should never leave things that cut in the hands of children, particularly of spoilt children. It's dangerous, my friend.

JOHN BULL. Indulgence has its limits. If he took the liberty of playing such an ill-conceived joke, he might have to repent it, and his eagle might lose some feathers, if not end on the spit.

FRANCE. The Flying Squadron! The Volunteers! "Hands off,



THE VENEZUELA QUESTION.

Germany!" and the others!—always the old, hackneyed Jingo chorus! However . . . !

Well! one may conjecture, rationally enough, that Russia, conjointly with the Middle Kingdom or with its tacit consent, will one day endeavour to establish herself in permanent villegiatura in India.

JOHN BULL. And the Middle Kingdom in—French India.

FRANCE. In French India—very well! One may suppose that Canada, whose situation is most unstable, will in the end become an appanage of your dear eccentric cousin. All that may be considered possible—probable even!

JOHN BULL (*anxious*). Very probable: so it is quite reasonable on my part that I should endeavour to ward off these contingencies. Were you not blaming Wolseley, a little while ago, for not having foreseen the difficulties of the Soudan campaign?

FRANCE. What you say is perfectly and incontestably logical. And so as not to be inconsistent with yourself, you will admit, I am convinced, that those in the same position as yourself should act in the same sense—take precautions as

you are doing. This is only right, is it not?

JOHN BULL (*a little uneasy*). Only right, certainly!

FRANCE (*very phlegmatically*). Then, my dear friend, we are absolutely in the same position.

JOHN BULL (*protesting*). Oh! far from it!

FRANCE. We have less to defend, but we have to defend it. However small what one has may be, one likes to keep it.

JOHN BULL (*more and more anxious*). I don't say no; but——

FRANCE. If you have your admirable East and South Africa, we have our North and West of the same continent, which looks fine enough. If you possess a fair number of Mahometans to take care of, we do not number less. If you have to defend your India, we have our possessions of Cochin China, Tonking, Annam, and Cambodia, to safeguard, as well as Madagascar, so close to your East Africa.

JOHN BULL. Alas!

FRANCE (*in a quizzing tone*). Ah! there! It's ours. You must give it up for lost, old man. What a lovely

pearl it would have been, all the same, to add to your East Africa. How you did covet it! But what can one do? All is not perfect in this world, and chance has its caprices.

JOHN BULL (*feebly*). Oh! it doesn't stick very much in my stomach, your island, with its fevers and swamps.

FRANCE. The grapes are too green, eh!

JOHN BULL (*with a gesture of negation*). Oh! not at all! That's not it.

FRANCE. That wasn't, at all events, the view of the Methodists whom you let loose there. What carp-like leaps they made, those worthy people, at the risk of twisting their spines, to seize those unfortunate grapes, before we had extracted our "piquette" from them! But now it's an affair finished; it's settled, signed, and sealed. There is no going back on it.

JOHN BULL (*sighing*). Ah! it's absolutely yours.

FRANCE (*ironically*). So then! my friend, still following in the footsteps of your reasoning, we have our India, as you have yours.

JOHN BULL. Smaller, much smaller.

FRANCE. Smaller, but on that account having much greater need of protection. We must therefore have the key, as you that of your Gr-r-reater India. I don't want to take yours from you : I simply ask you for mine—nothing more.

JOHN BULL. But you have one—a key—like every one else.

FRANCE (*jesting bitingly*). First of all, I am not *every one*, any more than you are *every one*. We are somewhat privileged, both of us, in that.

JOHN BULL. Both of us ?

FRANCE (*affirmatively*). Both of us. Don't pretend to be so astounded. My position here to-day is what it was yesterday—legally speaking.

JOHN BULL (*coldly*). No, not when one has to reckon with a *fait accompli*.

FRANCE (*drily*). Every one does not accept it.

JOHN BULL (*mocking*). But, as you say, you are not *every one*.

FRANCE. Then I will be specific : *I* do not accept it.

JOHN BULL (*seeking an escape*). Well, we have each our key : so what are you complaining of, my friend ?

FRANCE (*jeeringly*). I have my

latch-key, it's true, but I live far away, and you are here. You can push the bolts when you please, and I shall find no one at home—neither I nor the other Powers, who also live in the suburbs.

JOHN BULL (*protesting against such an imputation*). Oh! Could I ever do such a thing?—show such a want of politeness? That would be an off-handedness, a rudeness——

FRANCE (*still in the same slightly mocking tone, continuing his sentence*).—— Without a name. That's what it seems to me also. You will not act like that. I'm willing to believe it—particularly to me. We are friends, and friends do not behave to one another in that way. But one never knows what may happen. Friendship is a fragile article, even among relatives; cousin Jonathan is sulking with you. *A fortiori*, is it not more difficult to preserve it among strangers?

JOHN BULL. Friends!

FRANCE. Excuse me—between friends. (*Continuing.*) It does not always last. It is subject to vicissitudes, coldness, misunderstanding, which too often, alas! disturb its sweet harmony. And then, it may happen that unforeseen circumstances, such as the Transvaal

affair, or that of Venezuela, may bring about complications difficult to settle. How do I know? A fit of bad temper may take you, notwithstanding your capital disposition. A crotchet may enter your brain, a sudden impulse, a desire to break for a moment the *tædium vitæ*. Our cerebral system is so upset! Briefly, it may happen, one fine day, that you shut the door in my face, both to me and my friends, if they displease you. And it is that contingency, improbable though it may seem, that gives me matter for reflection. It's frightfully worrying. It prevents me sleeping. The mere idea of those bolts within reach of your hand troubles me horribly, and I would like there to be no bolts on the door—both I myself and the other Powers, who also have their little bit of garden out there. The passage must be free, and for it to be so, there should be no porter, neither one duly appointed nor otherwise; and you cannot remain for ever with your back to the door, and your hands on the bolts—the temptation would be too great.

Look at Italy with Abyssinia. She has not been able to resist, and no more will you. It has made her smart.

JOHN BULL. Is that a threat, my pet?

FRANCE. A mere observation, my dear fellow—a warning.

JOHN BULL. And a word to the wise.

FRANCE. You understand the slightest hint.

JOHN BULL (*jesting bitingly*). An indirect way of making me feel that my presence is inopportune and that it's time for me to sling my hook.

FRANCE. Were you to do so, none would blame you.

JOHN BULL (*bitterly*). Particularly you, my dear friend.

FRANCE. I less than the others.

JOHN BULL. You would even congratulate me.

FRANCE. Yes, with all my heart, for you would not be any the worse for that, and your interests could only improve.

JOHN BULL (*distrustfully*). Still, Madame, the transit of my vessels through the Canal being far superior to that of the ships of all Europe put together, it seems to me I have a right to a certain regard—to some privilege, however slight it may be.

FRANCE. To regard, yes. To the

regard one has for the serious customer who has a good account with you, but not one iota more ; no more than myself, for that matter, and I, nevertheless, dug out the Canal. The only advantage that I got, in virtue of the Khedive's firmans, which granted me the land and the authorisation to carrry on the works, was that of being able to direct the enterprise and manage it in my own way, after having undertaken to Europe, however, to leave the doors open to all comers and at all times. That in no way implied that I had the right to bolt them, on any pretext whatever. The Canal is neutral, and open to the whole world, under the protection of all the Powers collectively, but of none in particular.

JOHN BULL. Not even if it be the largest shareholder ?

FRANCE. Not even then. You hold a considerable number of shares, and you take an equivalent part in the management ; that's only fair. But apart from that, you are like ordinary mortals.

JOHN BULL (*discouraged*). I know, but all the same as principal customer.

FRANCE. As principal customer you have the right to look on and watch

your own vessels—and those of others—steam by, if it amuses you.

JOHN BULL (*disappointed*). That's poor for one of the largest shareholders in the Canal.

FRANCE. I'm very well contented with it.

JOHN BULL. Yes! But what's your transit by the side of mine? A grain of sand in the desert.

FRANCE. Bah! You will always be able to gaze at your commerce, even after all the abuse you heaped upon M. de Lesseps' wheel at the commencement of the works, and even during their progress. Moreover, even if you do pass through it oftener than the others, that, after all, is only because it's more useful to you than to the others. Therefore it's to you that the greatest service has been rendered. And because a neighbour has procured you the advantage of opening a more commodious road to your commercial transactions, that is no reason why you should refuse him right of way along it, whenever it may please you to do so.

JOHN BULL (*thoughtfully*). No matter—you will never drive the idea out of my head that, as an exceptionally good customer, I should have the right——

France (*gaily, interrupting him and continuing*).——to an exceptionally good position, eh, my good chap? The right to the bolts, for example, for its own little personal security.

John Bull (*sulky*). That would only have been fair.

France. Then! because I open at my expense and at that of the public, a road common to all, and you and yours frequent it more than myself and the others, because it is more useful to you than to the others, you gather from this that you have the right to take possession of it, to close it at both ends with a triple or quadruple lock, to keep the keys of it, and only to open it at your own very sweet will? But, my friend, that is sheer madness! It is time to make you undergo the shower bath treatment, in order to avoid the strait waistcoat. It is too bad, because you make greater use than the others of a thing that is the property of all, to conclude that you should and could appropriate it! Well, only you could conceive such bosh. The maggot who has taken up his abode in your brain-box must be a jolly big one! You seem dead set on that right to the bolts.

JOHN BULL (*piteously*). I will not hide from you, my dear girl, that the bare prospect of losing it completely upsets me.

FRANCE. So I perceive, from your manner of reasoning, my poor John Bull; but you must get used to it—give up all idea of bolting the door.

JOHN BULL (*in despair*). But my India?

FRANCE. And mine!

JOHN BULL. My prestige in the East, which will be lost!

FRANCE. And mine, which is lost already on that account!

JOHN BULL. Yes! but you——

FRANCE. Well! What? I——

JOHN BULL. You!—the first blow is struck; you have already begun to recover from it. With time it will pass. Whereas I, who am not yet at that point—the mere thought of it makes me shiver.

FRANCE (*briskly*). Bah! A little pluck! The first step is the most difficult.

JOHN BULL (*sadly*). But even that must be taken.

FRANCE. I will offer you my arm to assist you in making it.

JOHN BULL (*speaking very politely, but quite discountenanced*). That would be presuming on your kindness.

FRANCE. Far from it! it would give me real pleasure.

JOHN BULL. I have no doubt.

FRANCE. Oh, you can be sure of it.

JOHN BULL. And those poor Egyptians! What would they do without me?

FRANCE. What they did before; that's all they want.

JOHN BULL (*painfully*). My departure would break their hearts, I'm sure.

FRANCE. They will console themselves.

JOHN BULL (*sighing*). It will be hard to quit the banks of the Nile——

FRANCE. You will return to those of the Thames. They are more lively.

JOHN BULL (*casting his eyes up to heaven, and continuing*). This beautiful sky——

FRANCE. Very monotonous, and quite commonplace.

JOHN BULL. For the London fogs——

FRANCE. You are so accustomed to

them that you wouldn't care much, were they thick enough to cut with a knife.

JOHN BULL. This brilliant sunlight——

FRANCE. Are you so fond of ophthalmia?

JOHN BULL. This splendid climate——

FRANCE. In appearance; but in reality as treacherous and unhealthy as can be, and from which you should withdraw at once if you care to keep your liver and kidneys intact; you particularly, who have a weakness for whisky, a bowel-twister that comforts you there and kills you here.

JOHN BULL (*quite bewildered*). And my outlay?

FRANCE. It will be taken into account.

JOHN BULL. My expenses of all sorts.

FRANCE. They will be settled.

JOHN BULL. My works in progress?

FRANCE. They will be finished for you.

JOHN BULL. All my other business in suspense?

FRANCE. It shall all be arranged. Don't trouble yourself. Put your health before all, my good friend.

JOHN BULL (*anxiously*). You really think this climate——

FRANCE. Deadly in the last degree I tell you. Leave—there is only just time ; if only for health.

JOHN BULL (*completely prostrated*). To be thus forced to quit !

FRANCE. But, once again, as you must ! It's a question of your existence !

JOHN BULL (*plaintively*). I know, my pet ; but all the same, it's a hard lump to swallow.

FRANCE (*cheerfully*). Nonsense ! It'll pass down like a pill, and will do you good.

JOHN BULL (*very anxiously*). It requires a bit of reflection, all the same. One does not take such a step on the spur of the moment, or swallow the pill at a single gulp, as one swallows an oyster.

FRANCE (*in a peremptory tone*). There's no need for reflection, because it's inevitable, and there's no other course to adopt.

JOHN BULL (*completely at his wits' end*). But I'm not ready, hang it ! I must have time to pack up.

FRANCE. It will be done for you. They'll even put you into a cab with your luggage.

JOHN BULL. No, thank you! No cabs. No microbes' nests for me!

FRANCE (*obligingly*). In a victoria, then!

JOHN BULL. That's better.

FRANCE. And you'll be put in the train, ticket in hand.

JOHN BULL (*interrogatively*). A return?

FRANCE. Ah! but no! single only, sleeping car.

JOHN BULL. Insured?

FRANCE. From the point of your toe to the ends of your hair, and in detail, each limb apart, numbered.

JOHN BULL (*weakly abandoning the struggle*). You have an answer to everything; and you behave so handsomely, my dear girl, that really one could hardly refuse you anything.

FRANCE. It's decided then?

JOHN BULL (*having reached Rabelais' quarter of an hour, and hesitating at the last moment*). Yes and No!

FRANCE. It's yes or no; you must pronounce. Your safety depends on it.

JOHN BULL. Good heavens! What a hurry you're in, my beauty!

FRANCE. If you only knew your position!

JOHN BULL (*burning his ships and making up his mind*). Well, yes! *There!*

FRANCE. At last!

JOHN BULL. But how the deuce can I extricate myself from this hornets' nest, or get away from the place in a tolerably decent manner, preserving my dignity and—my interests.

FRANCE (*seriously*). My friend, your dignity commands you to keep your word by quitting Egypt without further delay, just as the dignity of us others forbids us to allow engagements entered into with us to be violated with such consummate coolness. The longer you remain, the falser your position will become, and the more difficult it will be for you to extricate yourself from it.

JOHN BULL (*resignedly*). I think you're right, after all! Evacuation becomes imperative. I feel it.

FRANCE. I will add that, apart from your dignity or your self-respect, this manner of saving the situation is the most suitable to your interests. You preserve at the same time your honour, and—the cash box.

JOHN BULL. If I could only save the keys also!

FRANCE. You are too exacting, after all!

JOHN BULL (*in a distressed manner*). Say what you will, I can't get over it. (*His face all at once brightening up.*) But I say! Suppose we keep them for ourselves—just you and me, you know? —the keys, and the right to the bolts —to the padlock if you prefer it; a simple little portable padlock. That's an idea, that! What do you think of it?

FRANCE (*laughing*). I say you are only a frightful kleptomaniac; whenever you see one of those useful instruments, you can't resist the temptation to put it in your pocket.

JOHN BULL. How can you say such a thing?

FRANCE. How! Not content with detaining the keys of the Mediterranean at Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus, and those of the Red Sea at Aden and Perim, you have your eye on that marvellous Suda Bay, which the old weather-cock is already advising you to clutch. For you are a far-sighted fellow, and, in preparing your *coups*, take time by the forelock. That superb port commands both Egypt and Asia Minor—that is to

say, the road to India, and, as a matter of course, the Suez Canal.

JOHN BULL. Bah! We have Malta; that's sufficient for us.

FRANCE. An abundance of wealth does no harm. Supplies would be more handy in the land of Minos, which is of a fair size, than in the island of Malta, of smaller extent. Your dodges at every turn, too, to prevent Crete returning to Greece, and the petitions signed by Cretans you have caused to be circulated in the island latterly, asking for English protection, seem to indicate that you are less indifferent to taking possession of it than you pretend to be. And now, besides all this—insatiable old cormorant that you are!—you would like to have the keys of the Suez Canal.

JOHN BULL. Oh! only to complete my bunch, and—even those would not do so.

FRANCE. That would not do so!

JOHN BULL. Alas! Two would still be wanting: that of the Dardanelles and that of the Bosphorus.

FRANCE. That's true! I had forgotten. It ruffles you a bit, my dear friend, doesn't it? to leave those keys in the care of the Porte, at the mercy of a

powerfully built neighbour, not easy to deal with, on the best of terms with the guardian of the Porte, and—sufficiently enterprising on his own account

JOHN BULL (*excitedly*). More than enterprising ; a real——

FRANCE (*cutting in*). Hush ! I don't like to hear my friends spoken badly of.

JOHN BULL (*smiling knowingly*). But I say, my dear girl, I know of a key in this neighbourhood which you would be very pleased to see me take.

FRANCE. Which, pray ?

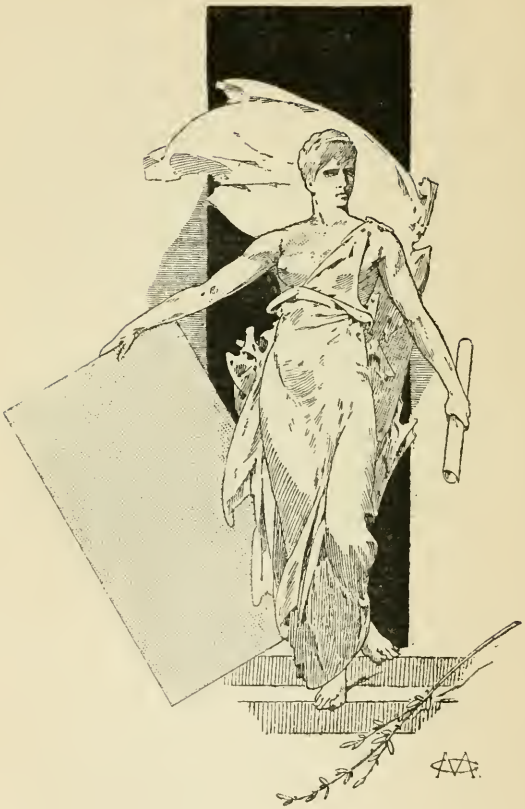
JOHN BULL (*quite jovially*). *La clef des champs*, as you say in France ; to bolt, as we say in England.

FRANCE (*seriously*). That's the key of the situation, my friend. I am happy to see that you understand it. I knew you were a gallant man, but I did not think you had such a pretty wit, and would take the matter in such capital spirits.

JOHN BULL (*modestly emptying his glass*). I take such a quantity, and distil it so well !

[*The lunch-bell rings.* JOHN BULL *gallantly offers his arm to* FRANCE, *and both disappear in the vestibule of the hotel.*]

THE SPHINX, AS IT OUGHT TO BE.



EPILOGUE

HERE is an article from the *Novosti* which the good gentlemen of Germany would do well to meditate over. Not that, in my opinion, my old John Bull is in so flourishing a state of health, or that his biceps are so solid as the Russian newspaper somewhat gratuitously maintains, but because I am convinced that, with a little training, if he is not disturbed in this hygienic exercise, he will soon have regained his strength, and his muscles will have acquired a respectable development.

Now, of all the peoples, Gobineau tells us, in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, the English people is that which possesses the greatest strength of fist. Let amateurs take heed !

The *Novosti*, under the title of " The power of England," points out that nations have often paid very dearly—as, for example, Russia in 1854 and France in 1870—for their illusions concerning the supposed weakness of their adversaries, and observes that the same result

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